

Jesus, Greatly Troubled and Distressed

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[0 : 0 0] Let's read from Scripture together from Mark chapter 14 verses 32 to 42. You'll see the text printed in your bulletin and it's also there in the Bibles if you'd like to turn there as well. This is the Word of the Lord. They went to a place called Gethsemane and Jesus said to his disciples, Sit here while I pray. He took Peter, James and John along with him and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, he said to them, Stay here and keep watch. Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and he prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. Abba, Father, he said, Everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will but what you will. Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Simon, he said to Peter, Are you asleep? Couldn't you keep watch for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. When he came back he again found them sleeping because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. And returning the third time he said to them, Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough. The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go. Here comes my betrayer. This is God's holy word. We are working our way through a series on the Gospel of Mark and we're doing that up to Easter.

The very last couple of days of Jesus' life in Mark 14 and here we're in the very last evening, even the last morning of Jesus' life. These are the most important days in all of world history. They are full of meaning.

They're full of the meaning that is salvation. There's never been, I think we could say there's never been a night as important as this night in all of human history. And if you've been with us we skipped verses 27 to 31 and we're gonna come back to that next week because before this and after, I guess so many, there's passages about both Peter and Judas so we'll look at them together next week. But tonight, this morning, we're gonna focus on Jesus and his emotions here that we just read about. They've eaten the Passover meal. The Passover meal was typically eaten from about sunset all the way to midnight and so they sang a hymn and they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane. So it's very late. It's at least midnight. It's probably in the early hours of Friday morning. Jesus is not gonna go to sleep before the crucifixion. He stays awake all night long and they walk about a mile or so east of Jerusalem as was his custom to leave

Jerusalem every single night across the Kidron Valley up the slopes of the Mount of Olives and there on the side of the Mount of Olives there is a place called Gesemini. Gesemini means olive press. It's probably an olive garden and this we're told in Luke and Matthew's account of this it was his custom to come here so this is normal for him. He liked Gesemini. It was a park. It was a garden. He loved being there and so he comes here to pray and we have this amazing scene. What do we learn? What do we learn about the Garden of Gesemini? What do we learn from it? That's the question this morning. Four things. We learned three things. No, I changed it to three. There were four. It's gotta be three. One, the fact of Gesemini. We learn about the fact of Gesemini. Very important. We learn about the deeper meaning of Gesemini and then finally the model of Gesemini. Okay, so let's let's do that. First, the fact. Lots of people had pointed this out about the Garden of Gesemini. It's a routine argument when you read the commentators, when you listen to others who have taught on it and it's a routine argument what I'm about to give you for good reason and I really do hope that this helps you today. Gesemini supports the historicity of Jesus. That he's real.

That the gospel accounts are real. That what we're being told here actually happened. Gesemini is a real support for that. That it's not a mere myth and here's why. If you look down at verse 33 and 34, we are given three emotion words. In verse 33 it says that Jesus is greatly distressed and troubled and then in verse 34 it says also that he was grieving, that he was deeply sorrowful, even the point that his soul was overwhelmed with death itself. Alright, when you when you read the commentators on this, they will give you the synonyms for these words and they will go so far as to say when we read these emotion words, we're reading words like Jesus was in terror. There came a moment where terror struck him, where he was shaken to the soul down to the deepest core. We're given words like alarm and agonizing grief. These are the synonyms that we read about here in these emotion words. I don't know if you've faced emotional agony in your life. Emotional agony. The dark night of the soul. This is the dark night of the soul. This is the darkest night of the soul perhaps in human history and it's only paralleled I think in our lives by the worst phone call you've ever gotten. The worst bit of news you've ever received. It's the dark night of the soul. It's emotional agony. It says here that he was so distressed and soul that he felt like he was going to die. You know, have you ever been in a place where your soul was in so much agony that it felt as if death was upon you and that's exactly what Jesus is experiencing here. Luke's account says that he was so distressed that he was sweating blood very, very literally. Now here's why this is so important for the historicity of the gospels. One commentator puts it like this, the grim realism of Gethsemane is a guarantee of its historicity. Why? First, because there was no category in the ancient world, no category in the first century, no category in the Jewish or Greco-Roman mindset for God to express emotional agony like this. We don't see it anywhere else. Did Hercules ever go through something like this? No. Does Zeus?

[6 : 45] No, never. We don't see it. It's not part of the Jewish or the Greco-Roman mindset. It's completely beyond expectation. And the second reason is that many heroes, if you think about it for just a second, many heroes throughout world history have faced their own execution. They've known about it.

They knew it was coming. Many, many people, thousands of people, faced crucifixion in fact. And this is the morning that Jesus is facing his own execution, is facing crucifixion, and yet you can think of so many that have done that with serenity, with calmness, who have faced the firing squad, who have faced the fires without tears. And Jesus here is so struck by terror and emotional agony that he breaks down, he falls upon his face, we're told. And here's how one writer puts it. He says, did not Socrates greet death as a friend and liberator to a better life? Did not the Stoics preach serene resignation to their fate? Why does Jesus who has foreseen his death and marched resolutely to Jerusalem to meet it now quail before it? There have been many Christian martyrs throughout history who have put their hands into the fire. And here is Jesus in emotional torment and agony. Now what I want to ask you is, have you really looked before at the extremity of Jesus's emotions here in this passage? And I think that when you do, it probably cuts through the expectation of most Christians for the way you expect Jesus to act. We are much more Stoic than he was. And because of our expectation and because of the ancient Near Eastern expectation, the first century expectation, here's the point. If you are trying to create a following around Jesus Christ, this great leader, this Messiah, this hope for the world, you don't put this story, you don't write about these emotions. They're beyond the expectation. They do not fit what people were looking for. You don't write about it, except for one reason, that it really happened. That it's exactly what took place. It's too surprising to be false, is what the historians say. Now secondly, that's the fact of, I guess, so many, secondly, the deeper meaning. Therefore, why these emotions? Why verse 33 and 34? Why the terror? Why the alarm? What is it that hit him in this moment that threw him to the ground before his father?

That's the question. Now I think the answer is that it's got to be something more than just the execution, the crucifixion that he was about to face. Because many, many people have faced that. Many have. And two more would be alongside of them. I think the answer begins on Isaiah 53, because in the Old Testament you have a prophecy about this night. Isaiah 53 is part of the suffering servant prophecies of the Messiah. And in one of those sentences it says, surely the Messiah has borne our grief and carried our sorrow. Ah, there's the beginning of it. What is it that he's facing? And the prophecy said, he will be the one who will bear our grief and carry the sorrows of the world. You see, it's something more than physical death. It's something more than the brutality of the cross. It's more than that. I mean, he has said many times in Mark's Gospel, if you've been here for it, that he's going to the cross, he's going to face his own death. He knows that. He knows that he's come for that. What is it that he sees in this moment, in this garden, in the early hours of Friday morning that strikes him with terror, that brings him to such tears and agony? What is it exactly?

And I think it's fair to say, it's probably fair to say, that there has never been a human being in all of human history that has faced the emotional agony that Jesus faces in this moment. And that's because there has never been a human being in all of human history that has faced the burden that he was actually carrying in this moment. What is it? That's the key. That's the deeper meaning. Where is it? It's in verse 35. And it's in verse 35, he prays to God and he says, Lord, my Father, let this hour pass from me. And in the very next phrase, he said, let this cup, we get the word cup in Luke and Matthew's account, let this cup pass by me. And that's the secret. That's the key. That's where we learn about the deeper meaning. What is this cup? The hour in the Gospels is associated with this idea of the cup that Jesus was about to drink.

And in the Old Testament, the cup, it can be one of two things. Sometimes the cup is positive. So people will talk about the cup, the cup of festival joy, the cup of wine, you know, the cup of salvation, the cup of greatness. In other times, the cup is the cup of God's wrath. And the metaphor, the image of the cup in the Old Testament is something like this, that every single time we sin against the Lord, every injustice and evil that gets committed in the world that we live in, by us and by others, is like a drip, drip, drip into this big old cup. Now God's cup is very big. It takes a long time to fill it because God is so patient with us.

[12:16] God is so patient with the world. And so over centuries and centuries and centuries, the cup is drip, drip, drip, every evil, every injustice coming in. And eventually, because God is just and righteous and cannot look past the evils of the world, eventually the cup pours over the edges. And his wrath and his judgment come forth. And we see all these little moments of that throughout world history. But then here, what is Jesus staring at? What is it that brings him to such terror, such agony? And it is that he knows that he is just a few hours away from drinking the cup of the judgment of the living God. It's not the crucifixion, it's not the physicality, it's something much more than that. It's spiritual terror, it's spiritual agony. He's about to go through something that no human being in all of world history would ever face. And that is what brings him to the point of such terror and such grief at the very same time. The depths, the depths of talking about this, alright, anytime the theologians, the preachers, Christians, we try to talk about what's going on with the wrath of

God coming down on the soul of Jesus Christ, we have entered into a territory of deep mystery. And one that we can't really describe very well. And one that is beyond any imagination. What does it mean to say that the sins of the world were placed upon him? I don't know exactly. But let me go as far as the Bible goes and just give you three quick things that this has to mean. Okay, one is this. In this moment he is experiencing such terror because he is realizing what he's facing. And what is he facing? First, he is the Holy One of God. He is the righteous one. He is good. He is perfect. And the Holy One, the Lord of Creation, is about to become the unholy. The one that is ultimately pure in himself from top to bottom is about to become impure. What must that be like? I don't know.

I've never been pure. We've never been righteous. We don't know what it's like for the righteous to become unrighteous. But he, the Holy, is about to become unholy. What a great reversal. Paul goes so far as to say this is lawlessness. It shouldn't be this way. What does it mean? It's lawlessness this Greek word Paul uses. It's such a reversal of all things good and it's not necessary. Now I'm not saying that it's not necessary for our salvation. What I'm saying is it doesn't have to be the case that the Holy One would become unholy for us. And that means that what he's doing is he's stepping into something that's voluntary, that's a gift in becoming known, in becoming in the eyes of God for us evil even though he is righteous. That's the first thing he's facing. The second thing he's facing is what Isaiah talked about. Isaiah talked about how he will carry our griefs and our sorrows. He will be the bearer of our guilt. He will become, as the theologians say, the sin bearer. Now I don't know if you've ever struggled with guilt. If you've ever struggled with the burden of guilt, have you ever carried a guilt around? Have you ever carried shame? Have you ever carried a sorrow, a grief of all kinds because of things you've done? I know that in my role and in anybody who does ministry or social work or anything, and many of you have this experience all the time, that you often do have to carry the guilt of another person, the burdens of another person, the sorrows of another person around with you, a few at a time maybe. And it's heavy. It's heavy. And it's part of the calling in ministry and in lots of other vocations or as a parent or anything like that. Modern people, we come, we have the people in our lives that overshare with us. The person at work that over shares, that tells you too much, that tells you everything going on in their lives. And eventually as a modern person, as an individual, you turn to that person and you say, you've got to stop. I can't carry all this.

I've got my own stuff. I've got my own problems. I can't carry your problems. My guilt, my shame, my sorrows, my griefs are big enough weights on my shoulders right now that I can't come to work every day and have you overshare with me. Your problems and your guilt and your shame and your griefs, that's what we think as modern people. And we understand that. Can you imagine Jesus Christ carried the sorrows, the griefs, the sin, the guilt of the whole world? All of us? What weight? What must it be like? I feel like I can't carry my own guilt and shames and burdens and those of the people around me. Yet he bore all of it. I don't know. I don't know what it means. The third thing that we see that happens here is not only does the Holy become unholy, does the Holy One be treated as if he's evil in our place? Does he become the sin bearer? But the third thing that he's facing that brings him to such agony is that he will bear God's judgment. He'll bear the wrath of the living God. He will take upon himself in a few hours from now at the cross that punishment that every injustice and every sin in all of world history deserves. How can we imagine that? All we can do I think is take all the images and descriptions of hell in the Bible and say it's more. Now this is where many people in our city and maybe even us today, some of you today as modern people will instinctively think, we will instinctively think, many people in our city will say, you know, I'm open to the God of love but I don't know about all this God of wrath stuff. I'm open to the God of love, the God who forgives. I'm open to the idea that Jesus is cross, his agony in this moment is an example of his love for us but I don't know that I'm open to the God of wrath, the God of judgment. I mean are we really saying that God the Father pours out the wrath of the sins of the world upon his only son? As a sacrifice, bloody sacrifice for sin. And modern people, we come, a place like Edinburgh comes and says I don't know if I can believe in that. I don't know if I can believe in the God of wrath. I really like the God of love, a God who is just love, a God who just forgives. Do we really have to say that God gets angry at sin and thereby pours wrath and agony upon his only son?

Now hold on a minute, let me just read to you one quote from somebody who I found very helpful in this point and this is what he says, very, very important.

[19 : 14] If you want a loving God, you have to have an angry God because just think about it for a second. Loving people, loving people get angry. People who love people are people who get angry. Not in spite of the fact that you're loving but because they're loving. In fact the more people you love and the more deeply you love people, the angrier you're gonna get in this world. When you see people who are ravaged by something, in fact if you see people who are ravaging themselves, you get mad. You get mad because you love them. If you see people ravaging themselves, destroying themselves or destroying other people and you don't get mad, it is because you don't care. We're told in Psalm 145 that God loves everything he's made and the reason he's constantly angry is because of what's going on down here. Therefore with all due respect, it is foolish to say I don't want a wrathful God, an angry God, I just want a loving God. Look if he's loving, he has to be angry. He has to be very angry at evil. He has to be very angry at sin if he really is the God of love. You can never separate it. He's got to do something about it. If he really loves the world, he's got to be angry about what's going on here. If he's really full of love, that means he's got to be full of justice. He's got to be. There's no way to separate the two. What is this scene really saying to us? The agony of Jesus Christ in his emotions here that is pointing to the agony of Jesus that he's going to experience in the hell of the cross. What is it saying? It's saying this, that the injustices we've committed are really real. They're so real that it takes Jesus all the way to this point. And it also means that God's love for you and the fact that he values you to the point of the Son taking on hell itself is really real. What does this say? If you don't have a God of wrath, if you don't have a God of anger at what's going on in the world, you don't have a God of love. And if you don't have a God who's willing to pour his wrath upon his only Son, then you don't yet see how much God is saying, I love you and I think you're valuable. That's what this scene really says. Now before we move to the final point, let me show you this in the illustration of these disciples. Verse 34, he's in the Garden of Gethsemane, not by himself but with the disciples. And he says to them, watch and pray for me. And when he says watch, be watchful, he's saying I want you to pray for me because I'm experiencing torment. And I want you to pray for yourselves. And we learned from Matthew and Luke. He also says you are about to face great temptation. I need you tonight like me to pray and ask God for help. He had just told them in the previous story, all of you are going to fall away and betray me in some way, at some level. And so you need tonight to do what I'm doing. You need to get down on your knees, you need to get down on your face and pray that you wouldn't be tempted to run away. Now three different times while Jesus is praying, while he's in agony and getting help from God the

Father, he stops three times and he comes to the disciples and every time he finds them sleeping, not praying, not fighting temptation. But do you see what that is? That is Jesus in the midst of utter terror before the cross, taking a break to go on a past world visit. That's what he's doing. He's taking a home visit, you know. He's going to see the congregation. He's going, he's traveling from his prayer times and his Bible study times and he's going and he's visiting these guys to check in on them and every single time they're not doing very well. They're not doing so great. And he even says that in that second visit, you know, he says, Simon. He talks to Peter specifically. What do you do when you're getting serious about something? You don't use the second name, you know, use the original name. You use this real first name. It's not Peter, right now it's Simon. Listen, Simon, I understand that you're sleepy, your spirit is there, your soul wants to be for me, but your flesh is weak. Now that's not a condemnation, that's not a judgment. That is Jesus Christ the pastor with the shepherd's heart looking and saying, I understand Peter's weak. Three times he goes on his past world visit and three times he finds disciples who are just sleeping on him, who can't, who cannot get it together, who really will fall away, who really will be tempted to the point of betrayal. And then at the very end in the third visit in verse 41, this is when he finally says, he gets up from his prayer, he sees them and he says, it is enough, the hours at hand. What is it that brings him to a place to say, I'm going to the cross? What is it? It's him coming and finding the disciples asleep. That brings him to the point where he's willing to say, enough, I'm going. I'm going to the cross. You see, the point he doesn't give up on them when they gave up on him. Three times over they gave up on him and he comes back in a pastoral visit and finds that and decides, therefore I will not give up on them. In other words, he sees how much they need him. He's trying to be encouraging, I know that your spirit wants. They're real and live in God, but your flesh is so weak, you can't do it. Therefore I'm going to the cross. Therefore my will is made up. The will of the Father for me, I'm going to do it. It's love. Look, have you ever slept on him? Have you ever betrayed the live in God? Have you ever rejected him? Have you ever not cared? Have you ever been indifferent? Have you ever walked away? Have you ever sinned? We go to sleep on Jesus and he says, for that very reason I will never go to sleep on you. I will never give up. I will never abandon it. Not the mission. I'm going to go all the way. In the midst of a terror and an agony that we could never understand and explain, the reason that he goes is love. He says, you know, not my will, Father, but your will. What's the will of the Father? The will of the Father is that he would crush the Son out of love for us. That's the reason he goes. Now finally, let me say this before I go to the final point.

Look, if you don't see the weight of God's wrath upon Jesus Christ, you don't yet know what your sleepiness costs the Savior and you don't know how much your value by the living God. If you don't see the heaviness of the wrath of God falling upon this man, you don't yet know the cost of your sleepiness and how much he loves you at the very same time. Lastly, that gives us then finally and briefly a model for dealing with our own emotional pain. All right? Look, if you've seen so far how much Jesus is for you, you can follow him and walk away and know that there really is a biblical treatment, a model for dealing with deep emotional pain and agony. The simple thing to say because we're running out of time is just this. You have a weeping, crying Savior and no other religion can say that. No other religion has that. The Greeks, the Romans, they never had that in their mythologies. No other world religion has a weeping, a crying Savior.

In other words, he knows what it's like to be human. He knows what it's like to grieve. He knows what it's like to be in utter agony. So let me close by just giving you four very quick things that Jesus, I think, gives you here in this passage to deal with emotional pain, to deal with disappointment, to deal with grief, to deal with your sorrows, to deal with the moments of emotional terror that might come upon you in life. And here they are. First, if you are reading this passage and reading about Jesus' emotions here and you are struck and surprised by his own emotional pain, something you didn't really expect, you expected more stoicism, then let me just say that that points out for all of us that our emotions, like the whole of who we are, are cultured. Now I don't mean cultured in the sense that our emotions go to symphonies and enjoy afternoon tea and things like that, visit the modern art museums. I mean cultured in the sense that all of who we are, including our emotions, are a product of the environment we grew up in, in the world we live in. And so if you come and say, I didn't expect, I thought he'd be more stoic, let me just say it points out to us that we're cultured people and even our emotional lives are trained by the world we live in. And that leads me to the question to ask, are your emotions, are your emotions being trained by the Bible rather than the culture? And even more than that, that also leads to the question of what else in my life am I shaped by? What other ways do I approach Christianity in which my culture is shaping me more than the Bible itself? Maybe today you're here and you're thinking, I don't know about the God of wrath, you know, I just want to believe in a God of love, but don't you know that's culture? Because almost every culture in all of human history has believed in a God of wrath. I said, of course there's a

God of judgment, of course God has to get angry at sin. We're one of the first cultures in world history that have ever struggled with this, it's culture. What else about our culture is blocking us from seeing the fullness of the vision of the Bible? We've got to have a reference point outside of ourselves to find the truth and it's the holy scriptures. Number two, when you face emotional agony, when you face emotional pain weeping and grieving in your life, this is a big discussion, I can only say a little bit, but just remember that Jesus comes as the pastor, the shepherd, who says, I know your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak. In other words, in that moment Jesus is saying, I know that deep down you do desire to walk in the path of the living God, you do desire to follow me, you do desire to put away sin, you do desire in the deepest places of your heart, you really do to not get so angry in those moments, to not express such annoyance, to not gossip so much. He says, I know that you want that, but that your flesh, your sin problem is overtaking you. Now that doesn't, he's not excusing the problem of the flesh, instead I just want to say, notice Jesus

[30 : 18] Christ, your pastor, who comes into this earth and says, I know your flesh is weak, I know your weakness. Remember that when you're struggling with things you can't shake, it's bringing you to a point of despair because you can't get over a certain sin issue or whatever it may be. Third, what can we do? What does he do?

With his emotional pain, with his agony, with his terror, he goes to that place that was his custom. Interesting, Jesus in the night of his terror goes to a place where he loved to come and pray. Do you have a place? Do you have places in your life where you say, I go here and I pray? I run to this place, a location, a physical location, he had one. Do you? Have you ever thought about that? It can be really comforting, really reassuring to meet with God in a routine place and pray, maybe out in creation, maybe in the quiet place of your home, but Jesus had that. And then what else do we see? We see that he, in that moment, falls on his face to pray. He falls on his face, he has a posture. The Psalms tell us, kneel before the Lord your maker. Do you think much about your posture before the Lord and how that affects your prayer life? Have you ever tried kneeling, falling on your face in order to pray to the living God? It's exactly what Jesus does here.

And maybe it's culture that's blocked us from that. But what else does he do? He pours out his soul. He's more honest, he's more open in his prayer, his emotions to God. He looks just like the Psalms here. The Psalms give us this huge range of emotion and it invites us, pour your soul, be honest, pour your emotions out to the living God. He wants to hear you. That's exactly what we see in Jesus here.

Fourth and finally, ultimately, how do you deal with agony, emotional agony, terror, pain, grief? The last thing is this, you know, where do you go when you say why? Why me? Why now? Why this? And we have to be willing to say, I don't know all that God may be doing in the midst of this moment. I don't know all that God may be doing in the midst of my pain. But here's what I can say for sure.

Here's what I do know for sure. Here's what you can know for sure. You can lift up your eyes and look at Jesus and know that He has experienced every emotional agony that you're facing in that moment, that He's gone through it. And Hebrews 5 verse 7 is very helpful. It says, in the days of His flesh, Jesus offered prayer and supplications with cries and loud cries and with tears. Not just this moment, it's plural, more moments. Jesus experienced such emotional pain in His life that He prayed frequently with loud cries and tears. You can run to Jesus and know, I have a savior, a weeping savior who has gone through everything that I'm facing, who knows what it's like to be human. And when you can say that, you can say that the cup of wrath that He drank has become for me ultimately the cup of festival joy. You might be sad and you will be sad in that circumstance, but you can have joy at the very same time. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the emotional life of Jesus and the range and the depth. We thank you that you tell us in the Bible of such alarm that He experiences as He faces the burden of the wrath of the living God. So Lord, use this passage to teach us, use this passage to reshape us and frame us towards an emotional life that actually mirrors the

[34 : 07] Bible itself. Lord, what would it be like if our emotions conformed to the image of the sun? We ask Lord, even more than that, that somebody today would experience the freshness, the beauty, and the goodness of the weight of that wrath poured upon the sun, the gospel itself, and that they would know your love for them. How much you love them. So we pray that now in Jesus' name. Amen.