

The Shepherd

Mark 14:26-41

In ancient Greco-Roman literature, the story goes that Socrates was condemned to execution by way of drinking hemlock. In his final hours, he was coolly tossing off ironic one-liners, surrounded by his followers. In Jewish literature (1 and 2 Maccabees), heroes don't die cool and aloof like the Gentiles. They died hot-blooded and fearless - praising God while being brutally executed. Nothing in ancient literature—resembles Jesus's final hours in the Gospel of Mark.

What do you do when the strong person in your life suddenly becomes weak? Children face this when a parent is struck down with illness or injury. Adults face this at work or nationally, when a leader breaks down. Pastors break down too. Emotionally and physically unable to engage in ministry. In today's passage, we are left to imagine what the disciples are going through with Jesus in His night of distress.

Prayer

Jesus always seemed to be in control. But this night He has been doing strange things. Just as they begin to relax for a supper together, He accuses a betrayer in their midst but will not name him. During the meal, (to the embarrassment of the 12) He gets down

and washes their feet. And says they must follow His example of service and love. And also during the meal, Jesus declares God is making a **new covenant!** And it's going to be sealed by His own death. (That's Jesus' blood paying for sinners to be rescued.) No wonder there's no mention of a lamb. This is no usual Seder meal. Jesus is the Lamb at this supper. For us this is great news. Jesus is asking us to remember a new Passover. We can say the same thing as those ancient Israelites who survived the death angel and crossed the red sea. *"I was a slave, under a sentence of death, but I took shelter under the blood of the Lamb and escaped that bondage, and now God lives in our midst and we are following Him to the Promised Land."* (T. Keller)

Believing Jesus as our Savior removes our sin onto Christ crucified. God transfers His righteousness to us. Righteous by Faith. And adopted as God's children, heirs with Christ. The Holy Spirit leads believers on the Way with hope and life forever to the promised home one day in glory. But this new covenant would have been very strange words for the disciples. It would have turned their faith from childhood upside down. The disciples can never again recline

at a meal, take bread, bless it, and break it without thinking of the last night that they were together with their Lord.

They closed their time in the upper room with a hymn (M14:26). By that time Judas was missing. You'd have to be pretty thick not to start guessing why. It would have been traditional to sing from a thanksgiving Psalm (114-118) so close to Passover. Singing to God can do wonderful things for the soul. Even with a gathering cloud of darkness in the heart. And certainly, Jesus had also planted seeds of hope. That He would send them the Holy Spirit. He prayed for their protection and that they would become the beginning of a people of God who would go on for generations experiencing the oneness of God's love as a testimony for the world (Jn 14-17). They had a mission. How do the disciples respond to God's mission? We'll soon find out. Prepare to see why Paul warns us not to think too highly of ourselves.

M14v27-28 Last Details

In the Greek Jesus literally says, *you will all become scandalized*. They will become an offense. Little did they know that their reaction to flee in terror would become proof of Jesus' resurrection. Because of their unbreakable faith later on. This is not going to be a story about Jesus and His

followers fighting the enemy side by side – like David and his might men. It will be Jesus, the lone Shepherd. His sheep will flee when He is seized (Zech 13:7). Mark was later inspired to include that even the faithful women ran away...when they first saw the empty tomb and angel (16:7). There's bad news and good news.

The good Shepherd will 'rise again'. It's the fourth time Jesus mentions this in Mark's Gospel (8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34, 12:28). Jesus will regather His sheep where He spent most of His time guiding them...in rugged, beautiful Galilee. As God fulfilled His promise to regather Israel after the exile (Ezek 34:11vv) so Jesus will regather His dispersed sheep. We are part of Jesus' promise fulfilled. And it pleases Him when we gather in His name.

But that's not what the disciples are thinking about. They never got past his first words...you will all fall away. People can be dull of hearing when their pride has been pricked. It's as if they didn't even hear the words 'risen' and 'Galilee'.

How can cowardice and confusion be part of God's plan? I protest!

v29-31 PRIDE

They are too focused on themselves to receive God's instructions. That is a lesson in itself. We wonder why God isn't doing things our way. It's because

we don't have pure motive (Ja 4:3), living. In heaven - perfected, we'll never tell God what to do because we will be freed from that pride.

What's even more crminating for Peter is he considers himself above the rest.

This time, Jesus doesn't say, "get behind me, Satan" (Matt 16:23) for his lack of concern about God's will. Instead He makes Peter an example. God's will must not to be taken lightly. God knows our nature and He gives us instructions for taking the right path. If someone thinks they can make it their own way...pray they will come to their senses. Submit to God. Resist the devil and draw near to God, humble. And God will draw near to you and lift you up (James 4:6-10).

Three times Jesus will ask for another way and place Himself in the hands of his Abba. But that same night, Peter, (who considers himself greater) will deny he even knows Jesus three times. So add 'bearing false witness' to the charge of deserter.

Instead of reacting with alarm at the warning, the disciples join in with Peter's boasting. They push back rather than heeding Jesus' instructions. It's too hard for their pride to swallow. Ironic, isn't it. The One who created and holds the universe in it's place by His very word,

is about to be tortured and paraded through the streets carrying the cross He will die on...killed by mortal, sinful beings. Who has the claim for being humbled by God? Yet Jesus remains silent. The disciples try to show they are 'above' God's plan...which is to keep them safe. They will have a chance to prove their loyalty very soon...even before the mob arrives. If anyone still thinks God plays favorites. Or that a person must be practically perfect to be saved. I hope you have some pretty good answers to that by now.

v32-34 I Need You

King David climbed this same hill when he was betrayed and abandoned. He ascended weeping (2 Sam 15:30) We see Jesus, Son of Man/Son of God as the man of sorrows prophesied hundreds of years before by Isaiah (53:3-5). "The scene is so intimate and frightening that we feel almost embarrassed to be onlookers." (NT Wright). Nothing had overwhelmed Jesus before...even 40 days in the desert tested by Satan. But now He is "deeply distressed" which also means "astonished" from the Greek. Why? The NIV's 'troubled' doesn't carry the extremity of the Greek. Jesus is overcome with horror. In His distress, He calls His people to Him. He asks

them to pray...to stay alert. Church, here we see the humility of God in the flesh. And He asks that His friends keep vigil. Could that be a cue...in our time of need? Do we have those who will help us bear burdens? Or are we 'above that' like Peter? Or fearful of transparency? God's will is clear that we be sincerely devoted, honoring and compassionate. (R12: 9-13, Gal 6:1-3). And I submit the actions of Jesus as evidence. All He asks is to stay awake near Him, in His hour of need. It's the ministry of presence. It happens here when we gather. It happens when we visit, when we host. It's very important to God. And it's a need we are wired with...right to our soul. Now comes the big question. What could possibly overwhelm the Son of God? The clue is in what He does next.

V35-36 Prayer During Distress

The NRSV is closer. He threw himself to the ground. Here Jesus opens his heart to his disciples, opens his heart to God, opens his heart to us. He lays bare his struggles, his agony, his fears about facing the ransom price. Facing God's wrath and separation is what he fears. Jesus knew no sin and was to receive the consequences of all sin (2 Cor 5:21). He turns to God and pleads, "Is

there a way this cup can be taken from me to accomplish the rescue mission?" In the Hebrew Scriptures, "the cup" is a metaphor for the wrath of God on human evil (i.e. Eze 23:32-34, Is 51:22). For eternity Jesus has had loving oneness with Father and Spirit. But in the garden of Gethsemane, He turns to the Father and all He can see before Him is wrath, the abyss, the separation.

If you want a loving God, you must have an angry God (T. Keller). How is that so?

When you see someone you love deeply harmed...do you get mad? Your senses of love and justice are activated together, not in opposition to each other. If you see people destroying themselves or destroying other people and you don't get mad, it's because you don't care that much. And in this past century, we have been numbed by the technology to see so many harmed. The more loving you are, the more ferociously angry you will be at whatever harms your beloved.

God's capacity for love is so much greater than ours. And we can't even imagine the pile of evil stacked so high since the fall. The word wrath isn't a

strong enough. The God of the Bible hates evil...just as we're commanded in our fellowship. Sacrificing His eternal beloved perfect Son is the only way to absorb that vast evil debt if we are to be rescued. That's how valuable you are to God. No human idea of a god would dare come up with that one. Our God is an awesome God. Notice the pattern of Jesus' prayer in great distress. He uses the pattern of lament in Scripture (Ps 13:1-3; 22:1-21; 31:1-24; 42:5, 11; 43:5 etc) where people pour out their heart in a rush of emotion. He trusts God will listen to His cries. Jesus addresses God in Hebrew and Aramaic...Abba Father. It's an expression of childlike intimacy and confidence in His nearness.

Everything is possible for you. Just as He taught the disciples (10:27), He prays knowing all things are possible – even sparing Him at the 11th hour. Yet He does not cross the line into trying to change God's purpose or bribe or blackmail. Might there be another way? And in child-like faith, He trusts God's will no matter what (unlike the disciples). And that is the Christ-like response to suffering? Trust God. "The love of Jesus—whose obedience is wide and long and high and deep

enough to dissolve a mountain of rightful wrath"—is the love we can receive by faith. No family love, friend love or romantic love—can match Him. Keller, T

Jesus, the Shepherd returns three times to check on His sheep. Do we keep checking on those that God has put in our lives to help?

V37-40 Weakness of Flesh

There is no one to help bear Jesus' burden. No one shared the ministry of presence. Don't let that be our testimony. Consider for a moment when the storm hit the disciples in the middle of the lake. They woke Jesus up in anger...are you just going to let us drown? This was your idea to travel now! But we all know Jesus wouldn't let them drown. Here, Jesus has warned them repeatedly that He will be seized and killed...and He is in great distress because the hour is so close. When I am in distress, sleep is the great relief. I think escape from stress plays a part in their disability to stay awake. And sleep becomes the enemies' tool to keep the watchmen from doing their job. From keeping wolves from stealing sheep. We should pray ever mindful of the weakness or our flesh . We succeed by

denying our natural approaches to things and instead seek to renew our minds and trust in the Spirit's lead. This is the only time in Mark's Gospel that Jesus calls out to someone directly by name. Simon! No nickname (undeserving of the name 'Rock' now) He's reaching out to his friend in all seriousness. Jesus instructs us all, watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The Holy Spirit is eager to help but we must not trust to ourselves (Is 31:3, Ps 51:11-12). Guard your hearts. Had pride not frozen their tongues and filled their heart with shame, they would have at least asked for forgiveness.

Each time Jesus returns to prayer, His resolve in God's will grows. At Gethsemane, there is silence from heaven. No voice, no glory, no dove, no ministering angels. Jesus knows there is no turning back. And God answers 'no' to us sometimes, too.

V41-42 The Hour Has Come

The account is being settled between Judas and the Sanhedrin. Jesus is now fully engaged in the mission after prayer. Bring it on! Jesus began His ministry 2000 years ago with these words, *"The time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and*

believe the Good News!" And now His hour has come. Jesus is about to become God's final lamb of sacrifice to rescue all who believe. Instead of being delivered from death, Jesus will be delivered through death and glorified by the resurrection to rule in heaven. **The final hour for everyone is approaching.** Jesus will return as promised righteous king to wipe out God's enemies. May we all know Jesus as our Shepherd and have the joy of helping others know Him too.

Read Psalm 23