

At one time king David trusted in his human army more than God. He took a census of all the military aged men in Israel. It displeased the Lord, and God sent a prophet to punish Israel. The prophet gave David the option of

- 3 years of famine.
- 3 months of 'fleeing from your enemies (2Sam 24:13 NIV).'
- 3 days of plague.

David reasoned, 'But let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great. Do not let me fall into human hands (2Sa 24:14 NLT).'

The plague started immediately, and 70,000 people would die.

In today's message Jesus gives himself into the hands of men. Jesus finds himself increasingly alone during this dark night.

### **Into the Hands of Men**

Mark 14:32-72



David would rather take his chances with a God of mercy than fall into human hands.

- It is said, 'Animals kill only for food or protection, but humans kill for many reasons.' For example, Cain killed because his sacrifice was not accepted like Abel's (Ge 4:2-9).
- Remember that 'Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. <sup>25</sup> He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person (Jn 2:24-25 NIV).'

Our approach since January, has been to go through Mark's biography segment by literary segment. That meant reading large portions to see why Mark organized it the way he did. Mark was an eyewitness, and this is a true account.

- In the first half, Jesus served people through miracles, deliverances, and preaching repentance. Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Messiah (8:29) is the turning point to the second half.
- In the second half, Jesus is the suffering savior who purchases our salvation with his life.

Since arriving in Jerusalem, Mark has been very careful and orderly in recounting Jesus' last week. Today, we look at roughly 6 hours, from just after Midnight when the Passover ended to dawn on Friday morning.

You recall, the disciples left the Upper Room singing the Hallel, Ps 118, 'The Lord is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation ... <sup>17</sup>I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done <sup>18</sup> ... he has not given me over to death (Ps 118:14, 17-18 NIV).'

But Jesus allowed himself to fall into the hands of Jewish religious leaders in order that we might be saved from our sins.

### **1. Gethsemane, 14:32-42.**

'They went to the olive grove called Gethsemane, and Jesus said, "Sit here while I go and pray." <sup>33</sup> He took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. <sup>34</sup> He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." <sup>35</sup> He went on a little farther and fell to the ground. He prayed that, if it were possible, the awful hour awaiting him might pass him by. <sup>36</sup> "Abba, Father," he cried out, "everything is possible for you. Please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine (Mk 14:32-36 NLT).'"

Jesus had to face this hour of crisis alone.

Mark records Jesus praying three times: at the beginning, middle, and end of the story (1:35; 6:46; 14:32). In all three cases Jesus was alone, it was at night, and there were demonic forces at play.

Peter, James, and John had affirmed their commitment to drink his cup, and die with him, yet they fail to grasp what it means.

Though out church history many have talked about a 'dark night of the soul.' For Mark's readers in Rome going through persecution, Jesus is an example of passing through the dark night of the soul with faith and hope.

There is a horror to this dark night of the soul. Jesus is 'deeply troubled and distressed (v. 33),' 'my soul is crushed to the point of death (v. 34),' and it is an 'awful hour (v. 35).'

- Gethsemane is 'the critical moment in Jesus' life when the full meaning of submission to the Father confronted him.'<sup>1</sup> Not my will but yours (v. 36) is a powerful example for us today.
- Matthew recalls it as 'not my desire, but your purpose (Mt 26:39).'
- Jesus could have called over 50,000 angels to rescue him (Mt 26:53), but he put aside his desires to fulfill God's plan.

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<sup>1</sup> William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark NICNT* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 516.

- The horror that night was separation from God as the Father placed all the sins of humankind onto him. ‘The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Is 53:6b NIV).’ Our sins were put upon him.
- Jesus went to Gethsemane to connect and enjoy his Father but instead ‘hell rather than heaven opened before him.’<sup>2</sup>

‘Then he returned and found the disciples asleep. He said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Couldn’t you watch with me even one hour? <sup>38</sup> Keep watch and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation. For the spirit is willing, but the body is weak.” <sup>39</sup> Then Jesus left them again and prayed the same prayer as before. <sup>40</sup> When he returned to them again, he found them sleeping, for they couldn’t keep their eyes open. And they didn’t know what to say. <sup>41</sup> When he returned to them the third time, he said, “Go ahead and sleep. Have your rest. But no—the time has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Up, let’s be going. Look, my betrayer is here (Mk 14:37-42 NLT)!”

Jesus probably prayed out loud while the disciples who fell asleep.<sup>3</sup>

- Jesus checks on them three times and encourages them to ‘watch and pray (v. 38),’ perhaps anticipating Peter’s three-fold denial.<sup>4</sup>
- You would expect Mark to focus on the theological importance, but instead he focuses on Jesus’ concern for the disciples.
- If you are going through a dark night of the soul, watch and pray.

This is Satan’s hour. Luke records Jesus saying, ‘This is your hour – when darkness reigns (Lk 22:53b NIV).’ His betrayer arrives just then.

Just as the Holy Spirit can use people, Satan can use people. I am sure Judas did not set out to be the betrayer, but he did by the voices he listened to.

Just as one man’s disobedience in the garden of Eden brought sin into the world, Jesus’ obedience in this garden would lead to life and grace for all who believe.

## **2. Mob, 14:43-52.**

‘And immediately, even as Jesus said this, Judas, one of the twelve disciples, arrived with a crowd of men armed with swords and clubs. They had been sent by the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders. <sup>44</sup> The traitor, Judas, had given them a prearranged signal: “You will know which one to arrest when I greet him with a kiss. Then you can take him away under guard.” <sup>45</sup> As soon as they arrived, Judas walked up to Jesus. “Rabbi!” he exclaimed, and gave him the kiss. <sup>46</sup> Then the others grabbed Jesus and arrested him. <sup>47</sup> But one of the men with Jesus pulled out his sword and struck the high priest’s slave, slashing off his ear. <sup>48</sup> Jesus asked them, “Am I some

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<sup>2</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 516.

<sup>3</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 514.

<sup>4</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 519.

dangerous revolutionary, that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? <sup>49</sup> Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple? I was there among you teaching every day. But these things are happening to fulfill what the Scriptures say about me." <sup>50</sup> Then all his disciples deserted him and ran away. <sup>51</sup> One young man following behind was clothed only in a long linen shirt. When the mob tried to grab him, <sup>52</sup> he slipped out of his shirt and ran away naked (Mk 14:43-52 NLT)."

The religious leaders needed inside information to get Jesus without causing a riot. Judas knew their favorite place in Gethsemane and what Jesus looked like.

This mob was made up of Temple police, mostly Levites who were assigned to maintain order in and around the Temple.

Judas identifies Jesus with a kiss, normally of respect, this time of gross hatred. Judas is not mentioned again by Mark.

Roman tradition was that the local officials managed the civil and criminal code, in Israel's case, it was the Sanhedrin.

Unique to Mark is the young man who fled without clothes (vv. 51-2), like Joseph when Potiphar's wife grabbed him. Mark's little snapshot is to emphasize that Jesus is even more alone.<sup>5</sup>

'I would rather fall into the hands of the Lord, then men.'

### **3. Sanhedrin, 14:53-65.**

'They took Jesus to the high priest's home where the leading priests, the elders, and the teachers of religious law had gathered. <sup>54</sup> Meanwhile, Peter followed him at a distance and went right into the high priest's courtyard. There he sat with the guards, warming himself by the fire. <sup>55</sup> Inside, the leading priests and the entire high council were trying to find evidence against Jesus, so they could put him to death. But they couldn't find any. <sup>56</sup> Many false witnesses spoke against him, but they contradicted each other. <sup>57</sup> Finally, some men stood up and gave this false testimony: <sup>58</sup> "We heard him say, 'I will destroy this Temple made with human hands, and in three days I will build another, made without human hands.'" <sup>59</sup> But even then they didn't get their stories straight (Mk 14:53-59 NLT)!

The seventy members of the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas<sup>6</sup> gathered solely to come to a legal settlement before dawn, before Jesus' supporters woke up.

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<sup>5</sup> Amos prophesied that 'even the bravest warriors will flee naked on that day (Amos 2:16 NIV).'

<sup>6</sup> Caiaphas had been high priest for 19 years, when 4 was the average, Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 531.

Mark interjects Peter by the fire to show that both events were happening at the same time.

The first step was taking evidence.

- There had to be unanimous evidence from at least two witnesses, who 'functioned as the prosecution.'<sup>7</sup>
- It is interesting that the Sanhedrin followed the letter of the law even though the outcome was predetermined.<sup>8</sup>
- They could not find two people who could keep their detail straight.

'Then the high priest stood up before the others and asked Jesus, "Well, aren't you going to answer these charges? What do you have to say for yourself?"<sup>61</sup> But Jesus was silent and made no reply. Then the high priest asked him, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?"<sup>62</sup> Jesus said, "I Am. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven."<sup>63</sup> Then the high priest tore his clothing to show his horror and said, "Why do we need other witnesses?<sup>64</sup> You have all heard his blasphemy. What is your verdict?" "Guilty!" they all cried. "He deserves to die!"<sup>65</sup> Then some of them began to spit at him, and they blindfolded him and beat him with their fists. "Prophecy to us," they jeered. And the guards slapped him as they took him away (14:60-65 NLT).'

The witnesses failed. Their testimonies were disqualified and inadmissible as evidence. They probably had already written up charges of blasphemy, but they could not trap him.

Out of desperation, Caiaphas asks clearly and Jesus answers clearly: 'I Am. And you will see the Son of Man seated in the place of power at God's right hand and coming on the clouds of heaven (v. 62).'

- This is one of the high points. Jesus' Messiahship was hidden in the beginning, and slowly revealed to believers along the way, is now made plain.
- Instantly, they label him a blasphemer worthy of death.

But they could not put anyone to death, even though Torah allowed them to stone blasphemers (Lev 24:16).

- The Romans reserved capital punishment for themselves.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 533.

<sup>8</sup> 'They assembled together, not with the intention of reaching a just verdict, but with a firm resolve to convict Jesus of a capital crime ... violation of the purpose and spirit of the law outweighed the regard, or disregard, of external legal forms', Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 533.

<sup>9</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 539.

- At dawn, Jesus would go to the Romans, but until then Jesus would remain with the Sanhedrin while papers were put in order.

'I would rather fall into the hands of the Lord, than men.'

Mark includes one more facet of that long, dark, night of the soul for Jesus.

#### **4. Peter, 14:66-72.**

'Meanwhile, Peter was in the courtyard below. One of the servant girls who worked for the high priest came by <sup>67</sup> and noticed Peter warming himself at the fire. She looked at him closely and said, "You were one of those with Jesus of Nazareth." <sup>68</sup> But Peter denied it. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said, and he went out into the entryway. Just then, a rooster crowed. <sup>69</sup> When the servant girl saw him standing there, she began telling the others, "This man is definitely one of them!" <sup>70</sup> But Peter denied it again. A little later some of the other bystanders confronted Peter and said, "You must be one of them, because you are a Galilean." <sup>71</sup> Peter swore, "A curse on me if I'm lying—I don't know this man you're talking about!" <sup>72</sup> And immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Suddenly, Jesus' words flashed through Peter's mind: "Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny three times that you even know me." And he broke down and wept (14:66-72 NLT).'

There is irony here. At the exact hour Jesus was declaring himself to be the Messiah, Peter is denying him.

Galileans had a unique accent which this servant girl recognized.<sup>10</sup>

Peter is a sober example for those suffering in Rome and for us today.

- Peter failed to watch and pray. His 'bold affirmation ... did not guarantee faithfulness.'<sup>11</sup>
- But remember, when Jesus told Peter he would deny him three times, Jesus also said: 'But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee (Mk 14:28 NLT).'
- Peter would be restored after he goes through the sorrow and shame of denial.
- Jesus is fully alone.

I personally know the dark night of the soul. It seems as if all hell is against you, and you are alone.

#### **Conclusion.**

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<sup>10</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 542.

<sup>11</sup> Lane, *Mark NICNT*, p. 544.

What helps me through difficult seasons are friends and trusting God, knowing His plan is bigger than my desires. If you are going through a season of a dark night of the soul, we will pray with you in a moment. But please know that ...

- 'This High Priest (Jesus) of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin (He 4:15 NLT).'
- 'God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you (He 13:5 NIV)."'
- 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Mt 28:20 NIV).'

It is not easy, nor is it fun to go through those seasons. But unlike the disciples and Peter, Jesus will never run away. Jesus' example and presence is enough. He will go with you through the trial to ensure that God's purposes are accomplished. After all, 'We know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them (Ro 8:28 NLT).'

Remember David and the plague?

While the plague was destroying Israel, David repented deeply:

- He took full responsibility: 'These (people) are but sheep ... Let your hand fall upon me and my family (2Sa 24:17 NIV).'
- Urgently, he purchased the land he was standing on and bought the man's cattle to offer a sacrifice. The landowner wanted to give the land and cattle to David, but David replied, 'No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing (2Sa 24:24 NIV).'

The Lord heard David's prayer and the plague stopped.

That episode in Israel's history is a parallel example for our salvation today.

- Adam's sin led to death.
  - The solution is to repent: 'The disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God (Mk 6:12 NLT).'
  - And the sacrifice was costly: 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45 NLT).'
- Jesus' last words on the cross were 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit (Lk 23:46 NIV).'
- 'Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great (2Sa 24:14 NLT).'

Salvation plea.

Next Sunday is the final message of this series.

Prayer.