

Substitutes and Sleepiness

(Mark 14:32-42)

(preached 12/27/15; Sunday AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me to the book of Mark, chapter 14, verses 32-43..

Let's read these verse together this morning...

*32 They *came to a place named Gethsemane; and He *said to His disciples, "Sit here until I have prayed." 33 And He *took with Him Peter and [n]James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. 34 And He *said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." 35 And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might [o]pass Him by. 36 And He was saying, "Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will." 37 And He *came and *found them sleeping, and *said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? 38 Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." 39 Again He went away and prayed, saying the same [p]words. 40 And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes*

*were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. 41 And He *came the third time, and *said to them, “[q]Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being [r]betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”*

Let us pray.

I was in 5th grade when I first saw the movie Ol Yeller, and I promised then to never watch it again.

If you have never heard of the movie, it was the story of an ol yellow dog that became a family pet.

And not just a pet, but he became the best friend and protector of the entire family.

Most of the movie was a great story of a boy and his dog, but the ending of the movie was far from great.

Ol Yeller gets rabies after saving the family from a wolf attack...

And he has to be shot.

I remember sitting in my school library and crying like a baby when that happened, and it has stuck with me and I have never seen the movie again.

O! Yeller was one of the few movies that have ever been made with a sad ending...

Toy Story 3 was another movie with a sad ending, where the boy has grown up and he gives away his toys at the end before going to college.

But movies like Toy Story 3 and O! Yeller are not very common.

Movie directors and producers almost always make movies with a happy ending..

Because they understand that is what people going to the movies want.

They want to leave happy and at peace and filled with hope...

So in most movies, the good guys wins, the bad gets caught..

Order is restored to the world and everything ends like it should...

Most movies end like the people watching them want them to end..

Most movies have very predictable happy endings..

When the hero rides off into the sunset..

If we think of terms of Jesus' earthly life, the truth about it is that it is an incredibly sad ending..

Here you have Jesus Christ who lived a life filled with goodness and good works...

Healing the sick...

Restoring the sight of the blind.

Casting demons out of tortured souls.

Raising the dead back to life.

Teaching the truth.

Pointing people in the right direction.

Glorifying God in all He does..

99.9% of Jesus' life was a feel good story.

However the final 12-15 hours of his life was the saddest of endings...

Now, if you read through the OT and search out verses that describe what Jesus will be like, you will find some interesting descriptions...

You will find promises of the feel good story of Jesus' life in OT predictions of Him.

You will find prophecies that he will give sight to the blind...

You will find prophecies that talk about His compassion for the poor...

You will find prophecies that talk about his commitment to the truth...

There is no question that the OT describes Jesus as someone whose life will bring happiness and joy to many...

But there are also some other verses in the OT that seem to describe the coming Jesus with sadness and gloom..

Consider Isaiah 53:3...

3
***He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of [c]sorrows and acquainted with [d]grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.***

This same goes on to describe the coming Christ as as someone who would be oppressed and afflicted in verse 7...

Then in verse 11, we read of the anguish that will come to his soul..

Psalm 22, which is a psalm written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, describes him as man overcome by troubles..

So, what is going on here?

How can the Jesus that we have walked with over the past 17 months in the gospel of Mark be described like that?

We certainly haven't seen that in Jesus' life so far.

He has triumphed over so many things...

Over Satan.

Over sin.

Over demons.

Over temptation.

Over disease and even over death.

Up until Mark 14:32, if you were to put Jesus life in a movie, it would be going the way we wanted it to go.

Victory after victory would be the pattern..

And though there has been opposition to Jesus in the form of the religious leaders, Jesus has overcome all that...

His story is going just like we want it to go...

But if you are an OT scholar reading Mark for the first time, you would be asking the question...

“Where is all the grief that is supposed to be true of Jesus?”

“Where is all the sorrow and trouble that is supposed to come His way?”

And up to this point in Mark, you would have a strong case because the grief and the trouble has really yet to show up...

But all of that changes before our very eyes today in Mark 14:32-42...

Because from Mark 14:32 until Mark 15:39 when Jesus takes his final breath, there will be nothing but trouble and grief for Him.

Consider all the sorrow and grief and trouble that will come to Jesus over the next few hours...

One of his closest friends will betray Him.

One of his best disciples will deny Him.

The Jewish people who should have loved him will call for his death.

The government that should have honored Him will send him to a cross.

The death that He didn't deserve will come to Him.

And the burial that never should have happened for Him will be completed.

And all of this will happen within the next 24 hours of His life.

If there was ever a sadder ending of a great story, it is the ending of Jesus life.

And the sad ending begins to take shape today in the verses that we just read in Mark 14:32-42..

We are going to look at these verses in two parts...

Verses 32 - 36 will show us...

I. The Submissive Savior (32-36)

Followed by....

II. The Sleepy Disciples (37-42)...

In verse 37-42...

Let's begin back in verse 32 and set the stage for what happens today...

I. The Submissive Savior (32-36)

In verse 32, we read that Jesus and the disciples came to a place called Gethsemane.

If you remember from 2 weeks ago, it is either really late on Thursday night or most likely, in the early morning hours of Friday morning around 1 or 2 am...

When Jesus and the disciples finish their Passover Meal which was also the first Lord's Supper and head out to the Mount of Olives...

We followed them there two weeks ago from a house in Jerusalem that had an Upper Room...

And we walked with them across the city of Jerusalem and out of a gate in the walls of the city down a hill and up the Mount of Olives..

Here are some pictures of that journey that put us on the Mount of Olives, which is quite an important place in the Scriptures..

Jesus taught about the end of times on this hill a few weeks back in Mark 13...

Jesus is going to be arrested on this hill in a few verses..

Then after his resurrection, he is going to ascend back to heaven from this hill..

And today, we know that He will one day return to this hill at the end of the tribulation period at The Second Coming...

Needless to say, the Mount of Olives is no ordinary place...

And on this night, Jesus and the disciples come to a particular place on the Mount of Olives called Gethsemane.

Here is a picture of what some claim is the modern day Garden of Gethsemane..

Though tradition tells us it is here, we may never know where the exact location was..

Gethsemane simply means “oil press” which suggests that Jesus and the disciples went to an area on the Mount of Olives that contained an olive press...

Here is a picture of an olive press, where olives would be placed and the rock would be rolled over them to press the olive oil out of them..

The press would be in a central place in the olive tree orchard and most likely surrounded by a wall..

And on this night, Jesus simply leads the disciples to this area to get away in prayer...

As they enter the area, he tells 8 of the disciples to stay here and then takes Peter, James, and John with him a little farther.

And while these 3 disciples walk with Jesus a little bit farther, Jesus is gripped with grief and distress and trouble in verse 33...

So picture Jesus walking on ahead with the 3 disciples and then picture Jesus being struck with grief..

People often ask why Jesus took these 3 disciples with him on this night...

Why Peter, James and John?

Remember in Mark 8 when Jesus climbed the mount of transfiguration?

Who did HE take with him?

Peter, James and John...

And on that mountain, those 3 disciples saw the glory of Jesus in all his splendor and beauty...

Jesus is God and His glory when it is not masked by human flesh is the glory of God.

It is an incredible sight and these 3 disciples got to see the height of Jesus' glory on that mountain...

But in Mark 14, they are going to see the low of Jesus' humanity.

They are going to witness the grief of Jesus and not the glory.

These 3 disciples who were privileged to see the triumph of Christ on a mountain will now witness the trouble of Christ on another mountain...

And maybe as they are walking away, their minds are going back to the last time that Jesus called them away...

Maybe they are anticipating another show of Jesus' glory, but what they got in verse 33 was just the opposite...

Jesus begins to be deeply troubled and grieved...

Ill never forget my grandfather at the funeral home on the night that we received friends for my grandmothers' death...

I was 16 at the time and I had never seen any emotion from this man my whole life...

But I remember very clearly when he walked out to the casket where my grandmother was...

He almost fell over with tears...

Extreme grief gripped him and troubled filled him so much that my cousin had to catch Him from falling down..

Grief can have that effect on a person, and Jesus even says in verse 34...

He was troubled almost to the point of death, and he is telling the truth...

People die very regularly from severe grief and distress...

Many spouses grieve themselves to death over the loss of a loved one..

And Jesus tells us that he was grieved to that point in the garden of Gethsemane...

Now, what could drive Jesus to the point of such grief and distress and trouble?

Well, we find out in verses 35 and 36...

It is the reality of the sin that is going to be placed upon his shoulders...

Here is what 2 Corinthians 5:21 says...

21 He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

God's plan to save people was to have the penalty of sin placed upon Jesus Christ as if He were a sinner...

This doesn't mean that Jesus became a sinner on the cross...

It simply means that God punished him like a sinner even though He never sinned in all his life even up to his last breath...

I have used this example before but it is helpful as we consider the idea of what happens to Jesus in the hours leading up the cross and even on the cross...

But in 5th grade, I was in the library at Carver Middle School in Whitmire..

We had to take library 1 hour each week and the librarian was not on my favorite teachers...

Her name was Ms. Ford and she didn't like anyone.

Well while she was going over the Dewey Decimal System of Classification, I was sitting with my friends at one of the library tables..

The and especially the chairs were too small for 5th graders, but we squeezed our knees under the tables and listened to her lesson.

But one day during the lesson, one of my friends accidentally raised the table up with his knees and it came down hard on the floor.

I had my back to Ms Ford but she called my name and told me to go see the principal for disrupting class...

I told her it wasn't me, but she told me to leave...

As I walked out of that library, I was in tears...

Going to see the principal meant a paddling.

And as I walked down that hall, the reality was sinking in and I was grieving..

Now, two things...

First, I was innocent of the charge...

My friend is the one who did it.

And just because she sent me out of the class didn't make me guilty..

It just meant I was going to pay for the crime...

But second, I was crying because I was guilty either..

I was crying and sad because I knew what was coming...

That is what we see here in verses 35-36...

Jesus is overcome with grief because HE knows the plan of God.

He knows that he is going to suffer unjustly for the crimes of others..

He is going to pay with his own life even though he was completely innocent...

And when we see his prayer, we also feel his agony and distress..

Lord, if there is another way to pay for the sins of others without having to bear that penalty myself...

Jesus is asking for other options here from God...

He is beginning to feel the separation that God will require for him to bear the penalty of sin...

In the garden on this night, the perfect fellowship that Jesus has always had with the Father is beginning to separate.

And Jesus over the truth that He is taking on the penalty of sin that night in the garden...

Yet, Jesus is a great example to us in his suffering...

Look at how He ends his prayer...

“Yet not my will, but what you will.”

This is how we pray, right?

God, I don't care for this trial in my life?

It is troubling and distressing and painful...

Please take it away.

IF there is any other way for me to learn what you are trying to teach me in another way, please use that way and take away my troubles...

However, You know best and I want it done Your way and not mine...

That is the prayer of faith...

That is the prayer that trusts God in all things..

That is a prayer of submission..

That is a prayer that doesn't demand your way, but God's way even if it brings pain and trouble to you..

And we pray that way because Jesus pray that way in the garden...

He is our example of how to pray and how to submit to God's will whatever the cost...

Jesus is the submissive Savior.....

Now, let's move to the very opposite example in...

II. The Sleepy Disciples (37-42)

As Jesus was agonizing in prayer not very far away from Peter, James and John...

He got up and came back to check on his disciples...

He had told them at the very end of verse 34...

To stay behind a little ways and keep watch for him and pray...

Now, these verses have often been preached as a severe rebuke for the disciples...

How they had fallen asleep and disobeyed the commands of Jesus...

And most people look at these verses and mock the disciples for their inability to stay awake and pray while Jesus went and prayed alone..

I think there is some truth in that explanation...

I think part of the reason that God inspired Mark and the other gospel writer to talk about the sleeping disciples is to contrast their sinfulness with Jesus' steadfastness...

On one hand, you see Jesus looking to God while the disciples are looking at the back of their eyelids..

I certainly think verses 37-42 highlight the sinfulness of these men...

But it isn't like we didn't already know that about these men..

We have seen their weaknesses time and time again..

If you had never read the gospel of Mark and you got to these verses, you would probably expect the disciples to be asleep..

After all, it has been a long day...

It isn't like it is 11 o'clock in the morning and they fell asleep during one of Jesus' sermons..

It is most likely after midnight and they have been busy all day...

They prepared the Passover meal Thursday morning..

They ate the Passover meal Thursday evening and they listened to hours of Jesus' teaching on that night...

And now it may be 1 or 2 am and they are in the dark garden with Jesus..

He is over there praying.

I am sure they were sleepy and tired..

Now again, that is no excuse to disobey Jesus, but we can feel for them..

On top of that, it has been a tiring week of going back and forth to the temple...

In some ways, we completely their exhaustion and desire to sleep...

But there is something else going on here as well...

If you read Luke's account of this night...

Here is what Luke said about the disciples desire to go to sleep...

Luke 22..

45 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow, 46 and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation."

Notice what is also happening to the disciples here...

They are sleepy from sorrow...

Think about this...

They have just watched their leader be overcome with grief...

They have watched him walk on ahead and kneel down to pray in agony...

They know that He is going to die...

They know that He is going to be betrayed...

They must sense that something is about to happen...

And it grieves them..

It grieves them to sleep...

We can all identify with that temptation...

Extreme sadness makes us want to go to bed so that our minds get a break..

And we are allowed to refocus and recharge...

So not only are the disciples physically tired, they are mentally distressed and wanting sleep as well..

Now before I make them into heroes, let me remind you that Jesus gave them a second and third chance to wake up and follow his command to pray...

And they never were able to obey perfectly...

And there is no doubt that they should have followed his instructions...

Jesus knew what was ahead of him and it grieved him...

But Jesus also knew what was ahead of the disciples...

And he was giving them the recipe to withstand temptation...

And that is prayer..

You see the disciples though the key to withstanding was looking within...

Remember what Peter and all the disciples said just a few verses back...

We will never deny you Jesus even if we have to die for you..

They thought that willpower was the only ingredient need to withstand temptation...

No wonder they are sleeping...

They probably they were getting their willpower up to take on the next day...

But Jesus reminds them and he reminds us that the key to withstanding temptation is not will power but prayer power...

People often struggle with sin and they think that they can conjure up enough will power to overcome it...

Jesus corrects that thinking in verse 38...

The Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

The truth is that your willpower is overcome by your flesh...

You may have willpower, but you need the Lord's power.

That is why you must not look inward but upward for help in temptation...

Good intentions always meet with a bad sinful nature...

The best of plans fall because of the worst of our flesh.

That is what we see here in the disciples....

Yes, they were tired..

Yes, they were grieved...

And yes the temptation to sleep was great but greater temptations were coming their way soon...

They were going to be tempted to desert and deny Christ...

And the strength to face that temptation was not to come in that moment, but from the prayer before that moment...

Jesus knew what was ahead for his disciples and he loved them enough to tell them to be busy praying and not sleeping...

And Jesus also knows what is ahead for all of us each day...

Every day you face temptation, and the secret for overcoming that temptation is not hoping the willpower will be there when you need it...

The secret of overcoming that temptation is tapping into the Lord's power before that temptation...

Unfortunately, the disciples were overcome with sleep and couldn't keep their eyes open even with multiple chances...

Conclusion

Let me offer a couple principles to take from Mark 14 this morning as we leave...

1) Take note of man's weaknesses.

We talk about this often, but we can't be reminded enough..

Men and women are weak creatures..

Think about these disciples on this night...

They were church going men.

In fact, they went to church and listened to sermons hour after hour, day after day for 3 plus years..

They had learned from the Master Preacher...

They had confessed Jesus as Lord.

They had seen His power..

Yet, they were still men to the very end...

Sleeping when they should have been praying.

Snoring when they should have been watching..

Snoozing when they should have been pleading with God.

It has often been said that the “best of men are men at best.”

If you are here this morning sure of yourself and confident in your abilities, you couldn't be farther from the Lord.

Confidence in the flesh is a recipe for disaster.

Only when you see how truly weak you are will you find the strength that comes with knowing Jesus Christ.

#2 - Take Christ as your Substitute.

Often times, I hear people at the end of their life regretting former sins...

I wish I hadn't done that..

I wish I had done that..

Do you know why they say things like that?

Because sin bring agony and trouble and sadness into our lives...

And for people who aren't saved, they go to the garden of Gethsemane at the end of their lives often.

Where they agonize over their sin.

Do you what is true for every true Christian in her today?

Jesus agonized over sin on our behalf.

He went to the garden and eventually to the cross as our Substitute..

He felt the separation from God that sin brings so that we wouldnt ever have to feel that separation again.

Sin brings grief and trouble and agony and distress, and the truth of the Scriptures is that you will either experience that grief and agony yourself...

Or you will repent of your sins and turn to Christ who experienced that grief and agony for you...

As a kid in school, I dreaded the word Substitute....

As a sinner in life, I know of no greater words than Christ my substitute...

Let us pray.