

## The Suffering Servant: Abandoned for Us

Mark 14:26-52

I listened to a story recently about a US soldier named Bo who was serving in Afghanistan in 2009 and who was captured by the Taliban and held in captivity for 5 years. He was finally released as part of a prisoner exchange in 2014.

He spent so much of those 5 years in complete isolation from anyone. Someone would bring him food a couple of times a day, but by and large he was locked in a dark room by himself. Even the people who did bring him food didn't speak English and they were his captors. Not a whole lot of friendly interaction going on there. When Bo was released they flew him from Afghanistan to Germany to a US military hospital to treat him and bring him back to health.

One of the big things they were prepared for was to try to re-integrate him back into normal human contact. They were prepared for him to be mentally unstable and in need of re-learning what it's like to be with people again. Why? We are designed to live with others. Isolation is one of the most difficult and tragic situations you can put another human being in. I know some of you are thinking, I am so busy most days that all I want is 5 minutes of isolation! I get it, but extended abandonment causes all kinds of psychological and physical issues.

We recognize our need for human community and interaction, but beyond human relationships we were designed to live in relationship with God. One of the tragic results of the fall was that Adam and Eve were exiled from the garden of Eden and the presence of God and the underlying longing for this presence causes a sense of desire that cannot be filled anyway other than by being brought back into the presence of God.

Obviously, the work of Jesus is to bring you and I back into the presence of God and to fill that longing in us for communion with the Triune God. But Jesus cannot accomplish that without taking our abandonment on Himself and suffering the mental anguish of being treated as if He were cut off from the presence of the Father. Keep in mind these words from Isaiah 53:3-4.

As we consider the way in which Jesus took our abandonment on Himself we come today to a passage that some have described as walking on holy ground. What happens here is a great mystery in some way but in others shines a light on

the magnitude of what it cost Jesus to give life to you and I. So, open to Mark 14:26-52 and we are going to see **3 Reasons Jesus was Abandoned for Us**

### **1. To Purify the Disciples (vv. 26-31)**

Keep in mind where we are in the story of Jesus' final hours. He has just celebrated the Passover meal late on Thursday evening and has reconstituted God's salvation around Himself as the new Passover lamb leading to a new Exodus for God's people. Look at verse 26.

Singing was a normal part of the Passover meal and they most likely sang the Hallel Psalms, Psalms 113-118. Traditionally Psalms 113-114 were sung before the meal and Psalm 115-118 were sung after the meal. Regardless, they sing and leave the upper room and the city proper and head east across the Kidron Valley and to the Mount of Olives. Just a side note here, Judas knew exactly where to find Jesus so heading to this location after the meal must have been pre-arranged.

It's quite late in the night and as they are walking Jesus engages the disciples in conversation. Look at verse 27. Jesus has already demonstrated the ability to know what will happen and he's already told them that one will betray him. Now he tells the disciples that all of them will stumble or sin or take offense at Him. Then he grounds this prediction in the OT.

The passage he is quoting here is from Zechariah 13. Chapters 9-14 of the book of Zechariah have already been quoted in Mark and have much to say about God's future redemption of His people and about the coming Messiah. In chapter 11 we read that the future King will ride into Jerusalem on a donkey and here the same individual is described as a shepherd whom God will strike down. Listen to all of verse 7.

The disciples are part of this, but also notice what verses 8-9 say is the ultimate goal of their abandonment. The sheep of the shepherd will scatter, but God will ultimately bring them back and purify them through the experience. Notice how Jesus says this in Mark 14:28. Jesus anticipates a restoration as He will go before them to Galilee. He's not going to cut them off forever.

The question here is, why would the disciples need purification? Look how Peter responds in verse 29. You can see the hubris here, the arrogance. It's like Peter is saying, "You don't know who you are talking to Jesus, I'm better than the rest of

these guys.” Jesus responds that Peter will be brought even lower than the rest. Look at verse 30. Peter only ups it. Verse 31. And the rest of the disciples go along with Peter’s attitude.

The disciples have failed to really grasp who Jesus is throughout this gospel and they have responded to Jesus with hard hearts and even arrogance at times. They need humility and this experience will provide it for them. We have a dear friend in Lynchburg who would always tell Bethany that she prays for me to be humble. I’ve told Bethany at times to please ask her to stop!

But ultimately I am thankful for it because pride is a soul destroying sin. Listen to what C.S. Lewis says about pride:

*“There is no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves. And the more we have it ourselves, the more we dislike it in others...According to the Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere fleabites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind.”* – C.S. Lewis

Even if it’s hard, to be purified of pride is a gracious gift of God. Jesus was abandoned by those closest to Him so that they might grow in humility. If the disciples could show pride and stumble because of their association with Jesus, certainly we can as well.

We need purification, but that come only come through propitiation. And that brings us to our second reason Jesus was abandoned for us.

## **2. To Satisfy God’s Wrath (vv. 32-42)**

Once they get to the Mt. of Olives they go to a place that was apparently well known to Jesus and to which they had been many times before. Look at verse 32. Gethsemane is a common word for those who are familiar with the gospel accounts but this was probably an oil press in the midst of an olive orchard on the Mt. of Olives. Keep in mind the twelve minus Judas are with him and so he leaves most of them to wait while he prays.

Look at verse 34. He takes his inner circle a bit farther into the orchard and Mark begins describing his emotional state and it’s not good. Mark uses two words here

“distressed” and “troubled” in our English Bibles. The first of these means that Jesus was alarmed. It’s the same word used in Mark 16 when the women enter the tomb of Jesus and find it empty, except for an angel clothed in white. It’s an appropriate word for surprise and for seeing something unexpected. The second word means that Jesus was experiencing a strong anxiety. He is deeply unsettled at what lies before Him.

He explains this to his inner circle and asks for help. Look at verse 34. This is the third different word used to describe his distress. This time he is extremely sad and I think he is sad because of his approaching death. With all 3 of these together we understand that Jesus was being emotionally and spiritually stretched to the limit. So, he leaves his inner circle to keep watch and he moves on, probably just a few feet further and collapses. Look at verse 35.

In the gospel of Mark, we have seen Jesus pray before, but we’ve not been told the content of those prayers. Here we see the Son, in unimaginable emotional turmoil, crying out to the Father that he might be delivered from the hour in front of him. What is the hour he is concerned about? It is the hour of his approaching death. It is the hour He has been predicting to His disciples. It’s so close that he comes to His father asking if there were any way possible for him to be delivered from that hour.

Now, we need to think carefully about what is happening here. What has Jesus so emotionally distressed and shocked? Is it the simple fact that he will suffer a terrible crucifixion? Is it death itself? If Jesus is just sad because he’s going to die, haven’t there been countless other people, unbelievers included, who have faced death with much more courage than this? To answer why Jesus is so upset let’s continue into verse 36.

He addresses God the Father here with an intimate name that is both Aramaic and Greek. No, this doesn’t mean “daddy”, but it is a close name of affection. What is his specific request? “Remove this cup from me.” The cup, of course, was referenced frequently in the OT as a metaphor for God pouring out his judgment and wrath over sin. Listen to Isaiah 51:17. Here, the cup was given to Israel to drink because of their covenant unfaithfulness. Israel had consistently pursued other gods and worshiped other gods and this aroused God’s just anger and jealousy. So, he gave them to drink of the cup of his wrath.

But it isn't just Israel who was pictured as drinking the cup of God's wrath in the OT. Listen to Jeremiah 25:15-17. This passage goes on to list the nations who were made to drink of God's judgment.

So, when Jesus comes here to the garden, he is not staggering and collapsing to the ground in light of the physical suffering he will endure on the cross. He comes to the garden and for the first-time peers into the cup of God's judgment and wrath over sin and understands that He will be drinking of that cup for people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

Here, in the garden, Jesus is beginning to bear the weight of sin, death, and hell. God is not angry with Him because He is the beloved Son, but He treats Him as the one who is carrying the weight of sin and He will do it alone. He comes to the garden to be with His Father in intimate communion and finds the cup of God's wrath in front of Him. This experience of being the sin bearer will culminate on the cross with the cry, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

*"He drank a cup of wrath without mercy, that we might drink a cup of mercy without wrath. The agony was not the fear of death but the deep sense of God's wrath against sin that He was to bear. His pure and holy nature shrank, not from death as death, but from death as a curse for the world's sin." - J. Oswald Sanders*

But notice that this request is framed with two phrases. On the one hand, Jesus acknowledges that everything is possible for God. On the other hand, he commits his human will to the will of the Father. This is an act of incredible faith and obedience. Jesus is staring sin and death in the face here and not shrinking from it but committing his will to the Father in obedience. Hebrews 5:7-9 describes what is happening in the garden. It's this obedience by Jesus' human will that ultimately secures our righteousness. He obeys on our behalf and drinks the cup of God's wrath for us.

Now, Jesus had brought his 3 closest disciples to be with him during this time. These are the three, Peter James and John who had confidently expressed their loyalty and commitment to Jesus, even being willing to die with Him. But look what has happened in verse 37-38. He tells them to watch and pray because their faith will be tried during the next few days. This is the same command he gave at the end of chapter 13. Watch. Be vigilant. After waking them up Jesus goes back and prays again. Verse 39-40. And finally it happens a third time in 41.

Notice in verse 41 that Jesus says “it is enough.” I think there what he is talking about is that he is now prepared for what will take place. His human will is committed to the Father and He’s ready to give Himself in full obedience. He has accepted the cup and will not begin drinking it. Look at verse 42. And this brings us to our last reason Jesus was abandoned.

### **3. To Carry Our Sorrows (vv. 43-52)**

Now, we’ll have to move quickly through this section, but here we finally see the realization of what Jesus has predicted. Look at verse 43. Judas comes with a contingent from these 3 groups, which make up the Sanhedrin, the ruling religious body in Israel. The agreement has worked. Let’s continue reading. Verse 44. A kiss was not atypical in this time and would have been a sign of greeting and friendship. Continue in verses 45-47.

But I want to draw your attention here to how Jesus responds in verse 48. He’s making a very specific point that is important. The Sanhedrin have sent a huge group of armed men out to capture this teacher in the middle of the night. Jesus makes note of this and says they are treating him like a thief, an actual criminal. What has he done? Well, verse 49 makes it clear that he had simply been teaching and debating with them in the Temple. Jesus is clearly NOT a criminal or an insurrectionist, but they are treating him like one. And ultimately he will be crucified between two criminals on the cross.

Why will he allow himself to be treated this way? Look at the end of verse 49. Again, let me remind you of Isaiah 53:3-4. He will be condemned to die as a criminal so that you and I might live. He will be abandoned by the Father so we can enter God’s presence. And, he will be abandoned by everyone closest to Him. Look at verse 50.

This is exactly what Jesus predicted in verse 27. But notice it’s not just his disciples that abandon him. We have this crazy little addition here in verses 51-52 that hardly seem to fit the story. People have debated for years the identity of this individual and have asked all kinds of questions about him. Some of said this is the gospel writer Mark who has shown that he was close to the events of that night. We certainly don’t know for sure. But why is this here?

I think this is here to show us the complete abandonment of everyone, even anonymous sympathizers. This young man was clearly identified with Jesus in some way because the guards seize him to arrest him. Literally no one is left to be with Jesus. He has been completely left alone and will carry our sorrows alone.

I have to admit, the interaction between the Father and the Son in the garden is a great mystery in many ways. It's hard to fathom the pain and anguish the Son of God felt when he looked into the cup of God's wrath. But, our response should be twofold; faith which leads to worship. We believe in order to understand and then we understand as best we are able in order to worship. I think this little poem by John Stott is an appropriate summary and application for us.

*We may not know, we cannot tell,*

*What pains he had to bear;*

*But we believe it was for us*

*He hung and suffered there.*