

St. Mary's Sermons

Date of Sermon: Maundy Thursday 2020

Mark 14:32-42. Gethsemane

New Living Translation (NLT)

Mark 14:32-42. Gethsemane

³² They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' ³³ He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴ 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,' he said to them. 'Stay here and keep watch.'

³⁵ Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that, if possible, the hour might pass from him. ³⁶ 'Abba, Father,' he said, 'everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.'

³⁷ 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?' ³⁸ Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

³⁹ Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰ When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹ 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. ⁴² Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!'

Jesus had always been the one in control, the one who was never flustered by anything. He always seemed to have the answers to the most perplexing questions and the power to deal with any and every situation. Yes, of course they had seen him sad before, not least when he stood in front of the tomb of his friend Lazarus.

But in the three years that they had been with him the disciples had never witnessed anything like this before. It was as though Jesus was in some sort of walking nightmare. Here we get a privileged insight into Jesus fighting the private spiritual battle that he must win if he is to fulfil the very purpose of his coming to earth. The scene is so intimate and frightening that we feel almost embarrassed to be on lookers.

It was as though he could see the cup, not the cup that he had given them to drink during the Passover meal that they had shared together not an hour or so ago, but the cup of God's wrath, the cup

that the prophets had spoken of. And he desperately, desperately, did not want to drink it.

As always, the gospel writers make no attempt to cover over the cracks but recount the actual events as they happened. Here they show that Jesus was no superhero, willing to boldly go where no one had gone before. Here we see the humanity of Jesus to the fore, resulting in him as we might say today, having a meltdown. Once again, we see that Jesus address his father with the intimate term abba, reflecting the closeness of their relationship. Jesus was, of course, well aware that nothing is impossible for his father, God. Yet as He looked into the darkness in sheer desperation, he begged his father, not once but three times, to find a different way. And the answer was no.

As if that were not enough for Jesus to bear, when he returns to his disciples, he finds them asleep. In his hour of greatest need, his closet friends let him down badly: they are not able to simply be there for him, to watch and pray with him. As Jesus prepared to face the most harrowing challenge of his entire life, he had to do so all alone.

Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus lives now to intercede for us. At this critical moment in the history of the world and our nation, may we his modern day disciples, be found not sleeping but by his side, crying out in faith and hope, to our loving heavenly Father, who is still able to do anything, for deliverance and mercy.

There in the garden of tears
My heavy load he chose to bear
His heart with sorrow was torn
Yet not my will be yours he said
(From Graham Kendrick's "From heaven you came")