



St. Michael's Church
CHARLESTON, SC

NOVEMBER 15, 2020

HEBREWS 4:12-16, MARK 14:32-42

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

Years ago I remember going to our then Bishop, Edward Salmon about a real dilemma. I had been asked to do something within a particular ministry, and I just wasn't feeling called to it. So I went to the Bishop, told him I just wasn't "feeling" it. He looks at me in the eye, and in his deep Natchez Mississippi Accent- and out of a deep pastoral concern for me says, "Father Zadig, God doesn't care how you feel!"

In some ways perhaps he was right about that situation, but the danger is that, for some of us here this morning, you might feel that way about God in general. That God not only doesn't know your feelings, and hopes, but couldn't care less about you! Perhaps you're feeling as if God has abandoned you and the only thing that seems clear is his silence. You might even be here today mad at God, and mad at people in your life right now with a felt betrayal fueling rage. If that's you, you will find that Mark 14 is profound.

Let me set the context. Jesus has just had his last supper with the 12 disciples, and in his heart, Jesus knows he's on the brink of an agonizing death, like a man knowing he's going to the electric chair. Mark 14 is a private view into the crippling agony of Jesus to deal with the pain of his upcoming death on the cross. Jesus would take three selected disciples to be with Him in prayer. They go to a place called Gethsemane, basically a garden right outside the city gates of Jerusalem. Think of it like walking from here to White Point Gardens, except the trees would not be Live Oak, but Olive Trees.

The word Gethsemane means oil press, appropriate because Jesus in His agony would be pressed, even to the point of sweating blood. His pain comes from two sources. First, is the pain of felt betrayal by his handpicked friends. Jesus goes to pray with the Father and tells Peter, James and John, "stay here for a moment and keep watch." They immediately fall asleep. They were His most committed! Peter you had just boasted you would stand for me even if it led to your own death! James and John, you promised you would be with

me to the end! These disciples fail Jesus at the most crucial time. Not just once but three more times, which leads Jesus to say, “Could you not watch with me for one hour?”

And it wouldn't get much better for the three men:

- Peter would end up denying Jesus three times,
- The rest of the disciples, flee in fear
- All except Judas who betrays Jesus face to face.

If you've ever been betrayed by another, Jesus felt it and understands it. Jesus knows this pain, he FEELS your pain, his EMPATHY is more than we can imagine. But this pain pales in comparison to second source of the pain. Pain so heavy it causes Jesus to literally fall on his way to praying with His Father. Jesus from His knees cries out, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow even to the point of death. Abba Father, Take this cup from me.”

My friends, have you ever been in so much pain it literally threw you to the ground? Jesus is in so much pain he uses the most intimate word for Father, Abba. Abba means DADDY. Daddy, take this cup from me. It's no polite quiet suffering. Jesus is screaming out his pain with heaving uncontrollable tears--is there any other way Daddy? There is nothing stoic about the raw emotion of Jesus. Which proves again that Jesus is both fully man and fully divine. He feels pain, relational pain and this pain of SIN.

You see, the source of His second pain is the cup. Abba, Daddy, take this cup from me. You must understand what “cup” means here. The cup represents the judgement of God on humanity. Here's how it works. Every time you and I sin, it's a drop in the cup. Every time you and I fall short of the glory of God, it's a drop in the cup. But the Cup is not only collecting our sins, but the cup is also collecting God's wrath against sin. The cup is overflowing with the wrath, the punishment of God. As a result of our sin, this cup of God's wrath is one we should be forced to drink.

David in Psalm 75 verse 8 writes:

God has a cup in his hand, a bowl of wine, full to the brim.
He draws from it and pours; it's drained to the dregs.
Earth's wicked ones drink it all, down to the last bitter drop!

To drink it down to the dregs means to be punished completely for sin.

The source of the second pain of Jesus is this: Jesus knows He's the one to drink the cup of God's wrath FOR US. Drinking the cup by dying on the cross. Draining the cup. This is what we mean when we say Jesus is the Propitiation for our sins. Jesus is the sacrifice for our sin. It's that weight of sin forcing Jesus to fall.

Paul sums up this agony in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 5. Paul writes:
“God put the wrong on Jesus who never did anything wrong so we could be put right with God.”

This is what causes Jesus to sweat blood. This is Gethsemane, this is the press!

How do we apply that to our life? If you have ever said, “No one could possibly understand my pain,” it’s a lie from Satan himself. Don’t leave here today with the same suffering you came in with, whether anger at God’s people or God Himself. Give that to Jesus, he died to take that cup from you. In Jesus we find Total Empathy.

- Jesus betrayed by those closest to him-he therefore understands betrayal
- Jesus, drinking that cup to free us from sin, understands our pain from sin..
- and consumed it for us.

It’s why Paul writes in Hebrews 4:

“You and I don’t have a high priest unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, no, we have One who in every way has been tempted as we are, yet did not sin!”

Which leads to the very best news. Because Jesus drank from that cup of wrath we deserve, we now have a different cup! At Communion we drink the new cup, the CUP of our Salvation! The New cup reminding us that HIS blood saved us from the cup of wrath! The Blood of Christ. The cup of your Salvation. The new cup, the cup that is proof that Jesus knows you more than you know yourself, the cup that proves his empathy is beyond anything we could ever imagine! Through that new cup, we, the comfortED ARE given strength to be the comfortER to others!

My beloved friends, doesn’t this make you love Jesus even more? Thank you Jesus for MARK 14! Yet at the end of our passage, verse 41, Jesus says, Rise, let’s go! There is only one way we know we get it. It’s time for action. Jesus had to drink the cup walking the way of the cross. For us, we have to drink from the new cup. As we have been comforted with the Empathy of Jesus, forgiven and free, we must take action and be the comforter to another. As one who has been comforted, by the new cup, it’s time to become the comforter.

If you’ve been betrayed, forgive as Jesus forgave..

If you’re living a “felt” condemned life right now, stop drinking from that cup,

Ask Jesus to forgive you and He will drain that cup.

Don’t hang on to something that Jesus died to take from you! Give it to Jesus who died to drain it.

But take it one step further..

- Who in your life has been betrayed?
- Who is suffering, as if they could never be forgiven----
- As if their hurt will always be with them?
- Whether the source of that hurt is betrayal
- their own sin...
- Or something they had nothing to do with

Rise up with boldness and say:

- there is one who understands your hurt
- there is one who can take your regret away,
- there is one who can forgive you
- so you can heal!

When the comforted becomes the comforter, the heart becomes aligned with God.

For instance, when I talk to parents who have lost a child, I know their healing is going in the right direction when they begin to comfort others who lost children.

RISE UP CHURCH! RISE UP from ones comforted to becoming the comforters.

Let me end with the story of Paul Cowley. Paul grew up in working class Manchester, England amid the chaos of alcoholic parents. His early exposure to heavy drinking, explosive arguments, and the violence of his father led him into homelessness and crime. At 15 he was expelled from school and entered a life of pure lawlessness and jail. After his release, he served in the army for 16 years as a tough guy, even fighting on the Army boxing team. Still running from sin and pain, he was invited to the Alpha Course, where he would reflect, "If all this stuff about Jesus is true, I can change! I could be the person I want to be, a man of character, strength, integrity, a good husband and father. God, if you can do all that, I am up for it."

Paul would then kneel down and beg God to "take away the gnashing of teeth in my spirit." God did...and this is where the comforted became the comforter. In 2005, Paul founded the charity 'Caring for Ex-Offenders' which helps Churches support ex-prisoners in their reintegration back into society. He even got ordained as an Anglican priest.

My friends, empty your cup today by giving it to Jesus, and drink from the new cup and rise up in that freedom and in His empathy. Become the comforted who becomes the comforter.