

Introduction: Pg. _____

**“A Time of Crushing”
Mark 14:26-52**

This morning as we come to Mark 14, we are confronted by some the most sobering scenes from the life of Jesus.

These moments demand our attention, not only because they teach us so much about Jesus but they stand to teach us so much about ourselves.

Of billions of people who have walked on planet earth, Jesus, more than any of them, understands how painful life can be in this fallen world. Jesus understands...

There are challenges we face *and then*, there are really difficult times.
There are really difficult times *and then*, there are seasons of deep pain.
There are seasons of deep pain, *and then*, there are times of crushing.

When I was 14 years old, my mother was diagnosed with bladder cancer (a season of deep pain).
When my wife was 26 years old, she lost her father to brain cancer (a time of crushing).

There are people who face various forms of relational abandonment (typically seasons of deep pain).
There are others who face the same reality, coupled with various forms of abuse (typically times of crushing).

Listen to me. You need to hear this. You're going to be tempted to forget it or not believe it when the seasons of pain and times of crushing come, but this is what you have to know!

Jesus . . . Understands. JESUS UNDERSTANDS!

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:14-15)

In the three scenes of Mark 14:26-52, Jesus is abandoned by friends, faced with the excruciating pain of the cross separation from God the Father, and ultimately betrayed into the hands of his enemies.

Mark 14:26-52 (text displayed)

This chapter provides us with one all-important encouragement.

The Point: When you face times of crushing, look to Christ.

I want you to see three truths arising from these three scenes. #1

1. When faced with crushing abandonment, Jesus remained resolute. (14:26-31)

In verse 26, the Passover Meal ends with a final hymn, likely Psalms 115-118. Then Jesus and his disciples make their way back to the Mount of Olives. They probably have the conversation of verses 27-31 while they are walking to Gethsemane.

In verse 27, Jesus shocks them with these weighty words: "You will all fall away..."

- Remember, this is coming on the heels of Jesus predicting how Judas, one of his disciples, would betray him. Now, he says "YOU ALL will fall away."
- The verb he uses here for "fall away," [*skandalizō* (you can hear our word "scandal")] communicates "serious spiritual failure." (Osbourne)
- While the disciples listen in disbelief, Jesus tells them the OT Scriptures actually point to this moment. Zechariah 13:7 says, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me." declares the Lord of hosts. 'Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'" We hear two key notes in this prophecy:
 - #1) The Shepherd will be struck. This points us to the cross looming just hours ahead. In John 10, Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd, who came to lead, teach, care for, and ultimately: "[The Good Shepherd] lays down his life for the sheep." (10:11, 10:15, & 10:17)
 - #2) When the Shepherd is struck, the sheep (ie., the disciples) will be scattered. In other words, when Jesus goes endures his greatest moments of suffering, his disciples will run and hide!

This news does not sit well with the disciples. Immediately, Peter speaks up with naive bravado: "Even though they all fall away, I will not."

Think about the pride and presumption in Peter's words.

- For starters, he's says with impulsive certainty that he will not fall away *even if* all the others do. Clearly, he thinks he's more devoted to Jesus than all of the other disciples. I'm sure they appreciate that!
- What is worse, he tells Jesus he's wrong.
 - Think about the last time he did this... Jesus said he's going to die.
 - Peter says, "No you're not!"
 - Jesus says, "Get behind me Satan!"

Jesus continues in verse 30: "Before the night ends, you will deny me three times"

- But when Jesus doubles down, Peter does the same! With fire in his eyes, and volume in his voice, Peter says emphatically: "If I must die with you, I will not deny you!"
 - Why did Peter say it? Did he really love Jesus? Of course he did! He said it out of sincere love and devotion.
 - But he also said it out of pride and presumption!
- Peter still needed to learn the truth of **Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."**
 - Peter fell prey to the "I've got this." mentality.
 - Peter fell prey to the "I would never" presumption.
 - Peter failed to recognize the capacity for evil lodged deep within his heart.

Verses 50-52 tell us how Jesus prophecy came true. "And they all left him and fled." The loyalty they promised was no where to be found.

And listen! Our hearts are no different! 1 Corinthians 10:12: **“Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.” (1 Corinthians 10:12)**

There will be times, like Peter, when we fall. There will be times like Peter, when we deny Jesus, if not by our words, certainly by our actions.

In spite of Peter and the disciples failure, Jesus remained faithful, and not only that, look at his heart in verse 28. As he faces the sting of abandonment he spoke words of hope: “But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.”

T: Jesus looked past the pain. He remained resolute. #2.

2. When faced with the crushing of crucifixion, Jesus fully surrendered. (14:32-42)

As Jesus and his disciples arrive in Gethsemane, Thursday moves into Friday. Aside from the cross, this is his most difficult moment of crushing. This place of prayer provides a visible picture of what is happening invisibly in his soul.

Why? The name of this part of the Mount of Olives is called “Gethsemane,” which means “olive press.” This was a place where olives were pressed and crushed by huge stones, so they could harvest the precious oil.

In the same way, Jesus’ soul was being crushed under the weight of what he faced.

- Jesus takes his 3 closest disciples with him to pray (Peter, James, and John), while the others wait in the distance.
- Here’s a thought: if Jesus invited his friends to be with him in these soul crushing moments, how much more do we?! This is why Discipleship Groups and Community Groups are so important. Who’s in your inner circle?
- Verse 33 says Jesus began to be greatly distressed and troubled, reminding us of Jesus’ full humanity. Jesus experienced every human emotion, and Mark uses the strongest language to describe them.
 - “He’s greatly distressed.” He’s also greatly “troubled,” pointing to “a deep-seated anxiety.” (Osbourne)
 - In verse 34, he tells Peter, James, and John: “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death.”
 - The NLT reads: “My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death.”
 - Jesus was overwhelmed with sorrow, so much that it felt like the taste of death!
 - The intensity of his despair echo the words of the righteous sufferer of Psalm 55.

Psalm 55:1-5

**Give ear to my prayer, O God,
and hide not yourself from my plea for mercy!
Attend to me, and answer me;
I am restless in my complaint and I moan,
because of the noise of the enemy,
because of the oppression of the wicked.
For they drop trouble upon me,
and in anger they bear a grudge against me.
My heart is in anguish within me;**

**the terrors of death have fallen upon me.
Fear and trembling come upon me,
and horror overwhelms me.**

What does Jesus do in these moments of crushing?

- Verse 35. He falls on the ground and prays, that if possible, the hour might pass. “Father, if there’s another way, I’ll take it!”
- Verse 36 contains the heart of his prayer. Let’s examine it closely.
 - “Abba, Father:” He turns to the one he loves the most! Prayer is always about relationship.
 - “All things are possible for you.” Prayer starts with who God is, but naturally moves to what God can do!
 - Jesus then exemplifies what **Paul Miller** says are the two things we should do when we pray: **“Ask boldly, surrender completely.”** (*A Praying Life*)
 - First, Jesus makes a bold request: “Remove this cup from me.” - Ask Boldly!
 - Jesus’ greatest crushing was found in the cup. What is the cup? The cup refers to spiritual suffering he would endure as he would die in our place and bear the just judgment on our behalf. The cup he is going to drink is nothing other than the cup of God’s wrath.
 - In Isaiah 51:17, the cup of wrath is called “the cup of staggering.”
 - As Jesus imagined paying the price for our sin, giving his life for our death, giving up his innocence for our judgment, he staggered!
 - Think about it: just one sin would have sent Jesus to the cross. One sin is enough to separate us from God forever. The reason that is difficult for us to grasp is that we do not understand how perfect God is!
 - We’re talking about just one time someone said: “God, I’m going to do my own thing. God, I’m going to choose my own apparent wisdom. God, I’m going to value something more than you.”
 - Now multiply that by the 1000s for each of us, and multiply that times the millions and billions of people in our world.
 - This is why he asked boldly: “Remove this cup from me.” But then he continued.
 - “Yet not I will, but you will.” - Surrender Completely!
- This is the heart of prayer: We ask for anything! but ultimately we trust his plans and purposes even when we cannot see them, even when we don’t understand.

In verses 39-41, Mark tells us he prayed the same words a second and a third time.

Do you know why Jesus prayed in these moments of pain and crushing? Because prayer was the priority of his life. Prayer was the reflexive response of his heart!

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.” (Hebrews 5:7)

But... in these moments of pain, where are the disciples?

- One minute they proclaim their death welcoming devotion. The next, they’re asleep! In fact, each time Jesus prays, (the first, second, and third time) they are sleeping!
- They had one job! “Watch and pray” [echoing Jesus’ call for spiritual vigilance heard in the Olivet Discourse of 13:34-35, 37)].

- “Jesus, we won’t deny you! We’ll die for you.”
- “Ok, right now, I just need you to watch and pray with me that you might not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
- Though they wanted to be faithful, they couldn’t muster the physical or spiritual strength to pray for one hour.
- “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.”

T: In spite of the crushing weight he faced in the cross, Jesus displayed a heart of full surrender! But that’s not all. #3

3. When faced with crushing betrayal, Jesus was found faithful. (14:43-52)

We’ve now come to the moment Jesus would be taken away by the religious and political authorities.

- Verse 43 tells us Judas came with a mob like crowd with clubs and swords.
- Because it was the middle of the night, Judas identified Jesus through the customary greeting of a kiss. The great and tragic irony is seen in what should have been a kiss of friendship was really a kiss of betrayal.
- As they seized Jesus, verse 47 says an unnamed bystander grabbed his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant. Luke tells us that Jesus immediately healed him.
- Jesus then points out their irrational actions in verses 48-49.
 - He first defends his character and innocence. “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me?”
 - Then he highlights the underhanded nature of their arrest. “If I did something wrong, why not come and arrest me in the daylight, any day you wanted!”
- But they needed to hide their injustice in the dark.
 - Jesus then says: “But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.”
- Mark is showing us how Jesus is in complete control. This is all unfolding according to God’s plan!
- Jesus predicted it in 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34, as well as 9:12 and 14:21.

Conclusion:

This is the secret to how he faced such crushing moments.

- How did Jesus remain resolute in the face of abandonment? He trusted God’s plan! “For it is written...” (v.27)
- How did Jesus face the just judgment of God in the cross? He depended on his Father and surrendered his will to the will of the Father! “Yet not I will, but what you will” (v. 36)
- How was Jesus found faithful in the face of crushing betrayal? He trusted the Father’s plan! “But let the Scriptures be fulfilled...” (v. 49)

FCF: When we face times of crushing, we often look to so many other places to get us through... (changing circumstances, self-resolve, external resources - if I can just pile up enough wisdom, enough money, enough ____) - even community), but ultimately we must “Look to Christ.”

The Point: When you face times of crushing, look to Christ.

What are you facing...? Ask boldly. Surrender completely.