

## **The Agony of the Cup**

**Mark 14:12-72**

Pastor Bryan Clark

There are many today that believe Jesus' suffering and crucifixion were merely the end of a well-intentioned plan that went badly. Is that true? And if that is true, what hope do we have that God can be there for us in the chaos of our lives—if He couldn't even hold His own plan together?

But what if it really wasn't the result of a well-intentioned plan gone badly? What if what happened to Jesus was actually the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan, and it happened exactly the way He said it would, right down to the very detail? What, then, would that say about God's ability to give us hope in the midst of the chaos of our lives?

Turn with me to Mark chapter 14, beginning in verse 12 to the end of the chapter. That's sixty verses, so we have a lot of ground to cover. But in my opinion, to break this down into smaller segments is to miss the point that Mark is trying to make. So we'll read it all and we'll comment on some of it.

**On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; prepare for us there." The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.** (Mark 14:12-16, \*NASB)

I mentioned last week that the annual Passover was a one-day feast followed by seven days of what's called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. So it wasn't unusual to refer to all eight days as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is what Mark is doing here. Sometime on Thursday the Passover lamb would be slain. Sometime after sundown on Thursday that would officially mark the beginning of Passover, and the Jewish people had from sundown to midnight to eat the Passover meal. It also was required that the Passover be celebrated within the city limits of Jerusalem. That is why the disciples ask the question, "Where do you want us to go to observe this meal?"

Now, there is some debate about when Jesus talks to the two disciples and sends them into town as to whether or not He had made previous arrangements and they were simply following through on that, or whether this was an act of His sovereignty. I think clearly it's an act of His sovereignty. It makes no sense if He previously arranged the details why He would have some mysterious signal where you follow this man with a jar. Why wouldn't somebody just walk them to where they were supposed to go?

It would have been very unusual to see a man carrying a jar of water; that was considered to be women's work. So this would have been a very unusual sign. You also have to realize Jerusalem wasn't a small place with a handful of people where this person could have easily been identified. During the feast there would have been hundreds of thousands of people there. So for these disciples to walk into Jerusalem and at just that moment there is this man walking by

with a jar of water is evidence of God's perfect sovereign timing. They would follow Him exactly as Jesus said and the details would unfold. That's why Mark says in verse 16, "When they came to the city they found it just as He told them." That statement makes no sense if it's merely Jesus going out ahead and making arrangements. All that statement would mean is Jesus was a good planner, and what's the point of that? But it was rather a statement of His sovereignty. Everything happened exactly the way Jesus said it would, which really sets up the tone for this text. Mark is going to tell us over and over and over again that every detail is exactly the way God said it would happen.

**When it was evening He came with the twelve. As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me—one who is eating with Me." They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" And He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."** (vs. 17-21)

As they enter into the Passover meal, there is quite a series of cups and a process that they go through which we're not going to go into, but somewhere in that process Jesus drops this bombshell: "One of you will betray Me." And the text says they were shocked. They were grieved. Each one of them said, "Lord, is it I?"

Now just picture that scene. None of them realized it was Judas. Judas had them all fooled. Judas had learned how to walk the walk; Judas had learned how to talk the talk. He had everyone convinced he was a follower of Jesus. But Jesus knew. And Jesus is identifying that He knew exactly what was happening.

In the Near East it was considered to be the ultimate act of treachery to betray someone with whom you would share in a meal. As a matter of fact, that's still considered true in the Middle East today. So Jesus is identifying the ugliness, the blackness, of Judas' heart. He goes on to say that even though this is a fulfillment of the Scripture, it will happen exactly to the Son of Man as was predicted. But woe to Judas! It's a way of saying that even though God said this is exactly how it would happen hundreds of years ago, it does not mean that Judas was preprogrammed like a robot and he had no choice. So Jesus is saying, "Woe to Judas; he will be held accountable for what he is about to do." It's again that tension we often feel between the sovereignty of God and the will to choose of mankind.

**While they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing He broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."** (vs. 22-25)

Jesus and the twelve sit down to observe the Passover meal. Now this is very important to understand. In chapter 14 verses 1 and 2, the religious leaders clearly did not want to arrest and kill Jesus during the Feast, for fear of how the crowd might respond. But for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years, the Hebrew people observed the Passover, which was a foreshadowing of the day when the Messiah would come and would shed His blood to atone for their sin. Even though the religious leaders had their timing, God had His perfect timing. At that exact time when the Passover was being celebrated, Jesus would identify Himself as the

fulfillment of the Passover. And on that Passover day, the Lamb of God would be slain for the sins of the world—with the exact timing that God intended.

Jesus is taking the elements of the Passover, specifically the bread and the cup of wine, and identifying Himself as the fulfillment of these elements. Now there are those denominations that believe that the bread and the wine actually are or become the actual body and blood of Jesus, and in that it has some sort of a saving power to it. We do not believe that. We believe that the elements are merely symbolic of the broken body and the shed blood. And we believe that for a number of reasons. When Jesus says, “This is My body” that word “is” in the Greek can either mean “this is” literally or it can mean “this is” figuratively. In the Gospels it goes both ways, so you get no movement one way or another from that term.

One of the basic principles of hermeneutics, or Bible interpretation, is to take the plain, normal meaning of the word. One of the things we would study in the teaching of Jesus is that He often, commonly, spoke in metaphorical language concerning Himself. He referred to Himself as the vine, as the road, as the gate, as the bread, as the water, as the lamb, as the shepherd. That was a very consistent, common methodology of Jesus. We would say therefore that would be the plain, normal understanding of His terminology here.

You have to also understand that for hundreds of years the Jewish people believed the elements of Passover to be symbolic. Therefore, taking that and Jesus’ pattern, you would have to have something very dramatic in the text to say, “But now, at this point, this suddenly becomes literal and not metaphoric.” And there is no such statement in the text. Just practically speaking, you also have to realize that Jesus was alive in their presence when He made that statement. They were not cannibalizing Him. Jesus did not say, “This will be My ...” It’s not future tense; it’s present tense. He is saying, “Right now this *is* ...”—meaning this is symbolic; they weren’t consuming Him.

One other thing to think about is that the Jewish people from the moment of birth had been taught they were not to consume anything that had the blood in it. So if Jesus meant, *This is literally my flesh; this is literally My blood*, these Jews would have been absolutely outraged. They would have had a huge response and it would have taken quite a process to work them through that—as to why now everything was changing. What you see from them is no such response, but as a matter of fact they seem to just understand it as symbolic language, as it has been all along.

Jesus takes the bread. Now when we serve the bread, the bread is in a container and we just take it out; it’s not terribly dramatic. But unleavened bread was more like a cracker, and when you break it there’s a certain drama to it. There’s a clear popping, a breaking, to it—which was symbolic of, “This is My body *broken* for you.” And there was an element of drama in that. Then of course, the cup of wine was symbolic of His blood, that was a fulfillment of the covenant made to Abraham, which we’ll talk about in a minute.

We would desire today, in light of the text, to observe the elements of communion right with the twelve. So we are going to do that. As the elements are being passed, I want you to think this way: To take the bread and to consume it is in essence to say, “I believe Jesus was broken for me.” It is your statement of faith of saying, “Yes, I do believe that.” If you believe that, I encourage you to partake. If you don’t, I encourage you to pass the tray on by. I know there are some of you who are just somewhere on the journey and you would say, “I’m not sure right now what I believe.” I understand that, and I would encourage you in these moments to think about that and prepare your heart for what’s yet to come.

(Serving of the bread)

For hundreds of years on this exact night, the bread would be broken, symbolic of a belief that one day the body of the Messiah would be broken. And on this night Jesus identified Himself as the long awaited fulfillment of the Passover. He took the bread and said, “This is My body which is broken for you.” (Partaking of the bread)

*Our Father, we are reminded that the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus was not a well-intentioned plan that went badly, but the fulfillment of Your perfect redemptive plan. Lord, in these quiet moments, speak to our hearts. Prepare us to better understand the price that was paid that we might have life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

We're going to serve the cup in silence. In this quietness I would encourage you to ask God to prepare your heart for what is to come—for what He wants us to understand from the text that we're about to go through.

(Serving of the cup)

We understand that the cup in the Passover celebration was symbolic of the blood that was to be applied to the doorframe of the houses in Egypt, when the last plague—God's judgment—came upon the Egyptians. God would pour out His wrath on the Egyptians, but if the Hebrew people applied the blood of the lamb to the doorframe of their house, when God came to judge He would pass over those homes. That was the symbolism of the blood at Passover. But we also understand, and Jesus identified it in this text, that it was the fulfillment of a covenant made hundreds of years before that with Abraham—where God entered into a covenant with Abraham and promised that He would shed His blood because of their inability to keep the covenant. Jesus also makes the statement that this will be the last time He will drink of the fruit of the vine until He drinks it with them in the new kingdom in the New Covenant. Jesus was clearly identifying that He would die, that He would be raised back to life, and that there is yet coming a day when His children will be gathered in His presence and we will celebrate together. All that was in His statement when He took the cup and said, “This is My blood shed for many.”

(Partaking of the cup)

*Our Father, again we are amazed. We find it difficult to process exactly what it was that You did for us. Lord, in the minutes ahead, open up our hearts to better understand the depth of Your suffering—that we might have life. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

The text says they sang a hymn and headed toward the Mount of Olives (verse 26).

**And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written: ‘I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.’ But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.” And Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you, that this very night, before a rooster crows twice, you yourself will deny Me three times.” But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they all were saying the same thing also. (vs. 27-31)**

Jesus quotes from Zechariah chapter 13 a prophecy that when the shepherd is struck down the sheep will scatter. And Jesus identifies that *that* is about to happen. He also in the process identified that although He will be struck down, He will rise again and He will meet them in Galilee (again, a reference to His resurrection).

Of course, the disciples respond to this (and Peter is the loudest voice) that they would never do such a thing. Even if they have to die with Jesus, they will do so. And Jesus makes the prediction that before the night is over Peter will have denied Him three times.

Notice the very specific details of this. Jesus is saying, “Peter, it will be specifically you. It will happen three times before the cock crows a second time.” Why such detail? Because again, Jesus is saying, “Every single detail of this is according to the prophesied plan of God.” This is exactly the way God mapped it out.

**They came to a place named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here until I have prayed.” And He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch.” And He went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. 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.”** (vs. 32-36)

I believe it is very important to understand what happened here in Gethsemane. Jesus arrives with His disciples. He pulls off Peter, James and John. There’s some debate as to why. I think they were His three closest friends. He knew what He was about to endure in the garden and He wanted them there for support or encouragement. The terms that are used are very interesting. The text says, “He became (which is something that ‘started’) very distressed.” The Greek word translated “distressed” is a very powerful term. It means to be shocked by terror. It is this sudden glimpse into the cup of what Jesus was about to endure, and what He saw there was so horrific He was suddenly taken with terror. The word “troubled” basically means a response to that shock. So when Jesus stepped into that garden, He caught a glimpse into the cup of what He was about to endure, and what He saw there was so horrific that He was absolutely terrified.

The text goes on to say that Jesus was so moved, so grieved, so horrified in His soul that He said, “It almost killed Me.” Jesus is not being overly dramatic here. Jesus is saying what He saw, what He caught a glimpse of in this cup, was absolutely so horrific it almost killed Him. As a matter of fact, it was so horrible that Jesus moved into the garden and fell to the ground. This doesn’t mean He carefully knelt and prayed. This means He just collapsed in a heap on the ground. He was in absolute anguish, and He prayed to the Father, “Isn’t there some possible way that this cup can pass by Me?”

In other words, what He was asking is, “God, isn’t there some other way?” Because what He saw in that cup was so absolutely horrific He begged the Father for some other way of redemption. This is why it is so offensive to God to say that Jesus was only one of many ways to God. That is exactly what Jesus was asking. This wasn’t one of many plans that God could have executed. This was *the way*. And Jesus cried out to the Father and asked, “Is there any other way? Must it be this way?” That raises the question: What did He see in that cup? In other words, what did He understand was about to take place that so stirred His soul it almost took His life in the garden?

This is where I think we make our mistake. What we think Jesus saw coming was the physical scourging and the crucifixion—which raises a question. Many people in the name of religion over history have been tortured and put to death for their beliefs. Many Christians have been tortured and put to death for their beliefs. Many of them went to their deaths very courageously

—many of them singing hymns right to the very end. And that raises the question: Why then was Jesus in such agony? Was Jesus in some way weaker than many of these others who seemingly went much more courageously to their deaths? And the answer is no. What Jesus saw in that cup I don't believe was the physical scourging and crucifixion to come. Because I do not believe the physical was the torment of the cross.

One way of processing this is to realize the scourging and the crucifixion in essence was the wrath of man. And that was nothing compared to what Jesus was about to endure—which was the wrath of God. According to 2 Corinthians 5, Jesus became sin for us. According to Galatians 3, He became our curse. In the Old Testament the cup is symbolic of the wrath and judgment of God. And what would come upon Jesus on the cross, at that moment that we will identify next week, was the complete wrath of God.

Think of it this way. I don't care how bad you think you are. I don't care how good you think you are. According to the Bible, every single one of us is a sinner, and we are sinners to the extent that we are deserving (underline that) of a torment apart from God forever. Now just let that sink in a little bit: the intensity of God's wrath poured out upon us forever! We don't tend to think of ourselves in those terms because we don't understand the holiness of God and we over inflate our own goodness. We bring God down to our level and we put ourselves up to His level and we don't think we have that coming. But if we could capture an accurate view of the holiness of God and our own sinfulness, God says that would be justice.

Imagine the intensity of the wrath of God that it would go on forever. Now imagine that God could somehow take that intensity of wrath and condense it into a few short hours on the cross. Just imagine the level of intensity of those moments. Then imagine that times the number of people in this auditorium and the upper room. Then imagine that times every person who has ever lived. Taking all of their eternal wrath and somehow condensing that intensity into a few short hours and it is that which would be poured out on Jesus at the cross. That puts Jesus' suffering into a category unlike any other being that has ever suffered.

That is what Jesus caught a glimpse of. It was absolutely so horrific it almost killed Him in the garden. The next time you are tempted to dismiss your sin as no big deal, maybe you'll remember this moment of what that sin cost Him. It was so horrific it would include in some mysterious way a separation between God the Father and God the Son. It was something that never from eternity past and never from eternity future will ever happen again.

Yet as Jesus caught a glimpse of that, He cried, "Abba! Father!"—which is an Aramaic term that we would probably translate as "Daddy." It's a term of affection. He is saying, "Father, I caught a glimpse of this—that we will be separated as I will endure the intensity of Your wrath." And that precipitates the cry, "Isn't there some other way? Isn't there some other way? Must it be this way?"

I know that we go to movies like *The Passion of the Christ* and we walk away saying, "It helps me understand to some degree the suffering of Jesus for my sins. Let me suggest to you that doesn't even come close. If you've got it in your head that was the extent of the suffering, you are not even in the ballpark. It was far more than we can even process. That's what Jesus caught a glimpse of when He looked into that cup.

**And He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again He**

**went away and prayed, saying the same words. And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. And He came the third time, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough; the hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”** (vs. 37-42)

It’s very interesting that Mark tells us the anguish that Jesus felt occurred three times. And three times he used the same words as He cried out to the Father, “Isn’t there some other way?” I think with each time He went back to His three friends, looking for some level of encouragement, some level of strength. But sadly with each return, He found them sleeping. Jesus knows that they loved Him; He even identifies that. But their flesh is weak. He is saying, “But they’re just not up to what they are about to experience.”

When Jesus after the third time said, “It is enough,” He was saying that He had poured out His anguish to the Father in the garden. The Father had met Him there. He now knew that this had to be the will of the Father. He had settled it in His spirit. And we would say, “He had put on his game face” and said, “It is enough. It’s time to go to the cross.”

**Immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a crowd with swords and clubs, who were from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him and lead Him away under guard.” After coming, Judas immediately went to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him. They laid hands on Him and seized Him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as you would against a robber? Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures.” And they all left Him and fled.** (vs. 43-50)

We know the story. Judas comes and betrays Jesus with a kiss. But then Jesus says to them, “What are you people doing? Why do you have this whole army and clubs and swords? You know, I was there with you in the temple everyday. Why didn’t you just take Me then? You did this in order that God’s prediction of what you would do would come true exactly as He said it would.” That’s what Jesus said: “You did this to fulfill the Scriptures. This is exactly what God said you would do hundreds of years ago.”

When He makes the comment that the others fled, it’s all He needs to say to tell us that what happened to the disciples is exactly what Jesus said would happen. Jesus is calling every shot and it is happening exactly the way He said it would.

**A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked.** (v. 51-52)

I know we read that and we say, “Now, what’s up with that?” Well, first of all, a linen sheet is a little bit misleading. It’s a linen outer garment. These people dressed with an undergarment and then with an outer garment. Typically it was wool; linen would identify a person of greater wealth. Most people believed that this person is Mark himself. As a matter of fact, many scholars believe the upper room was the upper room of Mark’s house. We know that his family

lived in Jerusalem. We know that they were quite wealthy. We know the church met there after the resurrection. It is very likely that that is where they met. If so, Mark was a young man who maybe overheard Jesus' teaching, and when they left for the garden he probably just threw on whatever was there and went out with this linen garment. Why does Mark tell this story? I think it is Mark's way of saying that even though Peter has been his source for the Gospel, he is saying for this particular event, "I was there." Mark is identifying himself as an eyewitness to the event.

**They led Jesus away to the high priest; and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes gathered together. Peter had followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest; and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, and they were not finding any. For many were giving false testimony against Him, but their testimony was not consistent. Some stood up and began to give false testimony against Him, saying, "We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and in three days I will build another made without hands.'" Not even in this respect was their testimony consistent. The high priest stood up and came forward and questioned Jesus, saying, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" But He kept silent and did not answer. Again the high priest was questioning Him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING WITH THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." Tearing his clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face. (vs. 53-65)**

It's a very helpful insight into the minds of the religious leaders. They bring Jesus in before the Sanhedrin. The Law says that they can't condemn a man without at least two witnesses that tell the same story. So here they are: On one hand, they have Jesus; now they're trying to come up with a reason to kill Him. The witnesses don't line up. They're even having false witnesses. But even the false witnesses' stories don't line up. So on one hand they are trying to execute the Messiah, all the while thinking, *If we can just get even these liars' stories to line up, we have technically fulfilled the requirements of the Law.* That's very insightful into the bizarre thinking of these religious leaders. They think as long as they fulfill this technicality, what they are about to do is then acceptable before God.

But even the liars don't line up, so in frustration Caiaphas asks Jesus directly. He eventually asks Him the question, "Are You the Christ? Are You the Son of the Blessed One?"—which is a clear statement of deity. Jesus identifies, "I am." And then He quotes from the Book of Daniel. In essence Jesus is saying, "If you people think you're going to win this battle, you have got another thing coming. Because I will rise again and I will come back and I will have My victory." Well, they are horrified by these comments. "What more do we need to hear? Everybody agrees it's blasphemy. He must be put to death!"

It is also helpful to realize that in verse 65 the "some" has to connect grammatically to the religious leaders. So the religious leaders begin to spit at Him, to blindfold Him, to beat Him with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" Then they turn Him over to the officers and the abuse continues with the Romans.

**As Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Nazarene.” But he denied it, saying, “I neither know nor understand what you are talking about.” And he went out onto the porch, and a rooster crowed. The servant-girl saw him, and began once more to say to the bystanders, “This is one of them!” But again he denied it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too.” But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this man you are talking about!” Immediately a rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, “Before a rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.” And he began to weep. (vs. 66-72)**

Who would have guessed that Peter would deny Jesus at all? Yet Mark tells us that Jesus called this right down to the very details. Three times before the cock crows twice—exactly as Jesus said it would happen.

There is a reminder throughout this text that this is not a well-intentioned plan that had gone badly. But rather this was the fulfillment of God’s redemptive plan that had been foreshadowed and pictured and unfolded for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years. It happened exactly how and exactly when God said.

And the reality is it happened because there was no other way. At that moment in the garden, if there was one other way of redemption, God certainly would have taken that option. But this was the only way that God could save and redeem sinful people.

The only thing more horrific than what Jesus endured on the cross as He took your wrath and mine would be to know that He did that for me, but to choose to reject that and instead to endure God’s wrath myself forever. Why would anyone do that? Why would *anyone* do that? If Jesus, in such horrific fashion took your wrath, why wouldn’t we just receive that, believe that, embrace that? Instead of eternal punishment, we are being offered eternal paradise. It is yours and mine for the asking, for the believing, for the receiving. Why wouldn’t we receive that?

*Our Father, words cannot really even describe the horror that Jesus endured on the cross as Your eternal wrath for all mankind was condensed together in a few short, intense hours. When Jesus caught a glimpse of that in the garden, it nearly killed Him. Lord, we understand that Jesus endured Your wrath because there was no other way, that we as sinful people could experience your salvation and dwell with You forever in paradise. Lord, the only thing more horrific that what happened on that cross would be for someone to reject that payment and to endure Your wrath. Lord, I pray that every person hearing this message would reach out and embrace your payment for our sin that we might know paradise rather than punishment forever. In Jesus’ name, Amen*

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Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512  
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April 30/May 1, 2005

## Study Questions

*The Good News About Jesus According to Mark*

### The Agony of the Cup

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Pastor Bryan Clark

#### Opening Discussion

1. Does life ever seem chaotic and even out of control to you? How do you respond in those times? What have you found that gives you peace in those times of life?
2. How would your ability to experience peace and hope in times of chaos be affected if the suffering of Jesus was simply a result of a plan gone bad rather than the perfect fulfillment of God's redemptive plan?

#### Bible Study

1. Read Mark 14:12-21. Identify all the ways in this text in which Mark seeks to communicate that Jesus was aware and in control of every detail of this night.

Why does Mark want us to know this?

2. Read Mark 14:22-31. What is the significance of the timing of these events?

How does this affirm again the sovereignty of God and the fulfillment of the mission of Jesus, rather than viewing the events as a tragic end to a well-intentioned life?

3. Read Mark 14:32-42. Jesus' agony in the garden was so great it almost killed Him (see verse 34). What was the source of the agony of Jesus in the garden?

See 2 Corinthians 5:21 and Galatians 3:13. How does Mark's inclusion of the term "Abba! Father!" in the prayer of Jesus related to the "cup" help us understand the deepest source of His suffering?

Was the physical suffering to come His deepest concern? Why or why not?

4. Read Mark 14:43-72. Identify everything in this text that would reflect the fulfillment of Jesus' predictions. (See Mark 10:33-34).

Why is this important? Were these actions that Jesus had control over in order to fulfill His own predictions?

5. Why do you think Mark records so many struggles and failures of the disciples of Jesus in 14:12-72?

What did Mark want us to learn about both Jesus and ourselves?

## Application

1. When was the last time you truly pondered the reality that your sin is so offensive to God that you truly deserved to be punished forever?

When Jesus looked into that cup in Gethsemane, He saw both your sin and your deserved wrath from God. Yet, in that moment He willingly surrendered to taking that sin and wrath upon Himself so you could experience eternal life rather than eternal death. What is an appropriate response to such an act of love on our behalf?

2. Interpret Jesus' words in Mark 12:29-31 in light of what Jesus did for us.

To respond properly to what Jesus has done for us is not just to love Him but to love others as He loved us. We often fail to love others properly when we lose sight of how ugly our sin was before God. When you look into your "cup" and you see how others have hurt you, how should you respond in light of what Jesus did for you?

Are others more deserving of your wrath than you were deserving of God's wrath? Have others offended you more than you offended God?

How has Jesus responded to your offenses?

3. Based on this text, what reason do you have for peace and hope when your world feels out of control and chaotic?
4. Does Jesus only call those whom He knows will never let Him down?

Does He know when He calls you that your future will include struggles and failures?

Like Peter, those struggles and failures can teach us we need Jesus even more than we previously realized.