

Holy Textures

Understanding the Bible in its own time and in ours

Mark 14:32-42, Jesus' Last Week - Thursday

The Garden of Gethsemane: Jesus Prays for Capitulation or Courage

Read the passage: [The Message](#) or [The New Revised Standard Version \(NRSV\)](#).

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Personal aside to begin with

In my humble opinion, this text is the key to understanding Mark's Gospel. Misunderstand this text, and you will misunderstand how the good news Mark begins his gospel with (Mark 1:1) is seen in the events that follow: Jesus' betrayal by Judas, arrest, abandonment by his followers, sham trial, denial by Peter, torture, and brutal execution.

If one needs any further evidence of the Divinity of Jesus, one need look no further than his continued patience with Peter, James and John. A mere human would have given up on these three long ago.

These are the three who witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8). And it is these three who subsequently proved their total lack of understanding Jesus' teachings and mission (Mark 8:32-33; Mark 9:28; Mark 9:33-35; Mark 9:38-39; Mark 10:10; Mark 10:13; Mark 10:24, 26, 28; Mark 10:32; Mark 10:35-38; etc.)

Nonetheless, it is these three that Jesus takes aside with him as he goes to pray.

Mark describes Jesus as distressed, agitated, troubled, anguished, full of sorrow (depending on which translation you are using).

And Jesus tells the three that his soul is deeply grieved / overwhelmed with sorrow / so sad I feel as if I'm dying / crushed by sorrow.

He asks them to stay near by and to stay awake. For companionship in his distress? Perhaps. As watchmen to alert him if/when soldiers come to arrest him? Almost certainly.

And of course, being the loyal, faithful friends they are - they promptly, and repeatedly, fall asleep! Like I said, unassailable evidence of Jesus' Divinity is that he continues his relationship with them.

Verses 35 and 36 then give us Jesus' prayer to Abba (better translated as Papa or Daddy than the more formal Father).

This prayer is crucial to our understanding of Jesus' death.

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Verses 35 and 36 use 3 key images:

- "this hour,"
- "this cup," and
- "your (God's) will."

These three are connected, but **NOT** identical.

"This hour," means the seamless flow of connected events that lie ahead. It does not literally mean, "the next 60 minutes."

"This cup," means one's life, and more specifically whatever it is that God offers / has placed in one's life. Think of Psalm 23, "my cup overflows."

Jesus prays that, if possible, this hour might pass from him. And that, since for God all things all possible, this cup should be removed from him.

Given that Mark has already told us that the elites are planning to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him; that Judas has already agreed to betray Jesus into their hands; and that Jesus has predicted that they all will abandon him and Peter will deny knowing him - Jesus does not need to be Divine to know what lies ahead, what "this hour" and "this cup" hold for him - pain and death.

However, it is a tragic mistake to assume that "(God's) will" for Jesus is identical to "this hour," and "this cup."

"God's will" for Jesus is **NOT** revealed here in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Rather, God's will for Jesus was revealed way back in Chapter One. Given the highest possible honour of being named "my Son, the Beloved, with (whom) I am well pleased," (Mark 1:11) God's will for Jesus, God's mission for Jesus, God's goal for Jesus is that Jesus:

proclaim the good news of God,
saying
The time is fulfilled,
and the Kingdom of God has come near;
repent,
and believe into the good news.
(NRSV Mark 1:14-15)

Let me repeat, God's will for Jesus is that Jesus proclaim the good news of God.

And for more emphasis, let me say, God's will for Jesus is **NOT** pain and death.

It has been devastatingly clear to Jesus for some time, that proclaiming God's good news about God's Kingdom of non-violent justice in the face of Rome's Empire of violent injustice will end - at least in this lifetime - with more of the same old story - violent injustice, that is, with his torture and brutal execution.

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But it is absolutely crucial **NOT** to make the tragic mistake of identifying God's will for Jesus - proclamation - with the response of the Roman Empire to this proclamation - pain and death.

Jesus prays for deliverance from "this hour" and "this cup." That is what he is willing / desiring. His flesh is weak. He is tempted. Tempted to abandon God's calling for him. Tempted to abandon proclaiming God's Kingdom under the threat of pain and death. Tempted to capitulate.

Nonetheless, Jesus also prays for courage.

Prays that "not what I will" (capitulation to the violent injustice of the powers of this world), but "your will" (proclamation of God's Kingdom of non-violent justice) be done.

"I want to capitulate; give me courage. I want to capitulate; give me courage. I want to capitulate; give me courage."

Praying thusly three times, Jesus emerges once again as the decisive, active Son of Man who moves to engage "this hour."

Enough!
The hour has come;
the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
Get up,
Let us be going.
See,
my betrayer is at hand.
(NRSV Mark 14:41-42)

If we are going to proclaim the Good News According to Mark this year, then I pray that no one, no where, ever again, will preach that God's will for Jesus was pain and death.

Instead, may everyone, everywhere, always, have the courage given to Jesus to proclaim God's Good News of God's Kingdom of non-violent justice - even, or perhaps, especially, in the face of this world's response of inflicting pain and death.

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