

Meet Jesus: as He's deserted

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Preacher: Alex Bedford

[0 : 00] So we're in Mark's Gospel and we're up to chapter 14, so you might like to turn that up. Mark chapter 14, it's on page 851 and I'll read from verse 26. It'll be quite a long reading.

So Mark chapter 14, reading from verse 26. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

And Jesus said to them, you will all fall away, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.

Peter said to him, even though they all fall away, I will not. And Jesus said to him, truly I tell you, this very night before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

But he said emphatically, if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same. And they went to a place called Gethsemane.

[1 : 14] And he said to his disciples, sit here while I pray. And he took with him Peter and James and John and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. And he said to them, my soul is very sorrowful, even to death.

Remain here and watch. And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will. And he came and found them sleeping. And said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep?

Could you not watch for one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. And 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 taking your rest?

[2 : 23] It is enough. The hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise. Let us be going. See. My betrayer is at hand.

And immediately, while he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve. And with him a crowd with swords and clubs from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders.

Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, the one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under God. And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, Rabbi, and kissed him.

And they laid hands on him and seized him. But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. And Jesus said to them, have you come out against a robber with swords and clubs to capture me?

Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching and you did not seize me. But let the scripture be fulfilled. And they all left him and fled. And a young man followed him with nothing but a linen cloth about his body.

[3 : 34] And they seized him. But he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. And they led Jesus to the high priest. And all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together.

And Peter had followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he was sitting with the guards, warming himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking testimony against Jesus to put him to death.

But they found none. For many bore false witness against him. But their testimony did not agree. And some stood up and bore false witness against him, saying, We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made by hands.

And in three days I will build another not made by hands. Yet even about this their testimony did not agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, Have you no answer to make? What is that these men testify against you? But he remained silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

[4 : 44] And Jesus said, I am. And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power, coming with the clouds of heaven. And the high priest tore his clothes, tore his garments, and said, What further witness do we need?

You have heard this blasphemy. What is your decision? And they all condemned him as deserving death. And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to strike him, saying to him, Prophecy.

And the gods received him with blows. And as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of a high priest came. And seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, You also were with the Nazarene Jesus.

But he denied it, saying, I neither know nor understand what you mean. And he went out into the gateway, and the rooster crowed. And the servant girls saw him, and began again to say to the bystanders, This man is one of them.

But again he denied it. And after a little while, the bystanders again said to Peter, Certainly you are one of them, for you are a Galilean. But he began to invoke a curse on himself, and to swear, I do not know this man whom you speak.

[6 : 03] And immediately the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

And he broke down and wept. This passage is very sombre, isn't it? There's betrayal, boasting, desertion, violence, lying, and eventually there's tears.

But I hope that it's going to warm our hearts this lunchtime. Because listen, this passage ought to build our trust in Jesus, and challenge us if we've been trusting in ourselves.

So, in our passage, Jesus is on his way to the cross, isn't he? Judas is going to betray him, and then the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, they're all going to descend on Jesus like a pack of wolves.

And the disciples, what do they do? They scatter, don't they? They fly away like sparrows on your lawn, when the cat turns up.

[7 : 14] And it all ends in tears. The very last word of chapter 14. We've got two points. The word of Peter is our first point, and then the words of Jesus, more briefly, is our second point.

So, first of all, the words of Peter. Have a look with me at verse 31. Chapter 14, verse 31. Look at what Peter says here. But Peter said emphatically, if I must die with you, I will not deny you.

And it's not just Peter. Look, can you see? They all said the same. It's a full house. So Peter, well, he makes this claim, doesn't he? And it's like masculine bravado, isn't it?

He sticks his chest out, and he says, if I must die with you, I will not deny you. What a hero he thinks he is. It's almost romantic, isn't it?

A knight in shining armour, for better, for worse, in sickness, and in health. To death do us part, says Peter.

[8 : 25] Think about this. At this point here, Peter is contradicting both Jesus and Scripture. I'm going to look at verse 27, and we'll see that. Look at verse 27.

And as they were eating, he took bread. I'm sorry, I've got the wrong verse here. 27. And Jesus said to them, you will all fall away.

So that's Jesus, for it is written, and this is the Bible, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. So that's both Jesus and Scripture.

And Peter thinks he knows better. He's like us sometimes, isn't he? We think we know ourselves, don't we, better than Scripture. But Jesus knows us, doesn't he, friends?

Jesus knows us inside out. And our knights, our knights in shining armour, they arrive at Gethsemane. Jesus will soon be crucified.

[9 : 25] He'll have his father's wrath poured into him. He'll experience hell. It's the Apostles' Creed, isn't it? He descended into hell.

And Jesus falls to the ground, doesn't he? Verse 35, and prays. And it's, think about this, friends, it's the most anguished prayer that's ever been uttered on planet Earth.

Hebrews chapter 5, verse 7, look at this. In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears. And Luther said, no one feared death as much as this one. And we ask, why? Why is he so distressed? Think about this. Christians were later thrown to the lions and they were martyred, rejoicing, rejoicing and singing that they were counted worthy to suffer for the Lord.

Why is Jesus so distressed? Friends, it's the impending wrath of his father, isn't it? Look at verse 36.

[10:40] Can you see? Verse 36, he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. That's his father's anger.

Yet not what I will, but what you will. Not what I will, but what you will. Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

Jesus knows, doesn't he, that he's walking into the path of his father's wrath. And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all, said Isaiah.

Think about this. Experiencing hell would be bad enough. But scale that all, scale it all up, multiply it.

Add to it your hell and my hell. It's absolutely horrendous, isn't it? And the disciples, what are they doing? They're asleep.

[11:37] And verse 38, Jesus says to them, the spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.

And aren't we all weak, friends? Don't we all fail him? Have you been there? Have you let the Lord down? I know I certainly have.

We're like the disciples, aren't we? We lose the plot. The world manages to seduce us, to desensitize us to the gravity of things and the church nods off to sleep.

You've lost your first love, says the Apostle John, Revelation chapter 2. And the disciples are sleeping on watch. I was chatting to Billy Bradford this morning and Billy said this, he said, they had no concept of what was going on.

Friends, we would need a God of infinite grace, wouldn't we? Infinite mercy and love to put up with the way that we treat him, wouldn't we?

[12:47] And here he is. And he gets up from his knees and tries to muster his flagging troops. Verse 42, rise, let us be going, see my betrayer is at hand.

And then one of the most heartbreaking moments in scripture, another disciple, one of the twelve, he approaches with a kiss.

The kiss of death, verse 44. Can you see? Now the betrayer had given them a sign saying, the one I will kiss is the man, seize him and lead him away under God.

and when he came, he went up to him at once and said, Rabbi, and kissed him. And they laid hands on him and seized him.

Colossians chapter 1, Hebrews chapter 1 and the beginning of John's gospel, John chapter 1, Jesus is the creator of the whole universe, the whole cosmos.

[13:51] He made it and he owns it. He created Adam and Eve. He owns us today. He breathed the breath of life, didn't he?

Into Adam and Eve and Judas walks up to him. The created approaches the creator and there's a kiss and it's the kiss of death.

It's like the antithesis, think about this, it's like the antithesis of the created order. It's not that intimate scene in the Garden of Eden, is it?

Of Jesus breathing into humankind. No, this is the Garden of Gethsemane. It's not day, but night. Not the giving of life, but the taking of it.

Judas kisses his creator with death and Satan, think about this, has upped his game, hasn't he? And then, desertion is added to betrayal as his friends flee.

[14:57] Verse 50, and they all left him and fled. They all left him and fled. And then, perhaps, John Mark was in this as well. We think verses 51 and 52 might be his signature.

Just look at that. And a young man followed him with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked.

They all desert him. He'd called them, hadn't he, to follow him. But they do the opposite. They'd been with him for something like three years. They'd listened to him teach.

They'd eaten with him. They'd seen him forgive sin, perform amazing miracles, bring people back from the dead, and they'd just run. Don't they? Leave their teacher for dead.

And then a pack of wolves now descend on him. Just look at verse 53. Can you see? And they led Jesus to the high priest and all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes came together.

[15:59] So Jesus is just like a condemned man. And it's like the disciples have handed him over to his executioners. And Peter's warming himself by the fire.

His mind's all mixed up. He wants to be with Jesus but he doesn't want to be seen to be with him. And we're all afraid, aren't we? We're embarrassed.

We keep our distance. We limit our commitment to him. One of the servant girls, she spots our hero, Peter. If I must die, I will not deny you, he'd said.

And this wee lassie, she locks eyes, she locks eyes with macho man. Look at verse 67, friends. Just turn over the page.

67. Can you see? Seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, you also were with the Nazarene, Jesus.

[17:00] But he denied it, saying, I neither know nor understand what you mean. And he went out into the gateway and the rooster crowed. And just look at the last word of chapter 14.

Look where our hero is there. Just look at the last, look at the last verse, verse 72. And immediately, the rooster crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had said to him, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.

Peter suddenly realises, doesn't he, who's in control here? And he broke down and wept. And friends, we all deny Jesus, don't we, in one way or another.

Our words don't tally with our lives. And that's why we need him, isn't it? That's why we need Jesus. So we've thought about the words of Peter.

Let's finish more briefly now, thinking about the words of Jesus. Jesus. Jesus is the only person on the planet who's lived properly.

[18:09] He's the only person whose words are consistent with his life. John says, doesn't he, the word became flesh. And as he died, friends, he didn't only forgive our sin.

He gave us his integrity. integrity. He gave me his integrity. He gave you his integrity, if you've asked him. He gave us his 100% obedient record.

Isn't that amazing? How awesome it is. You know, you get the righteous track record, the 100% track record of God on earth.

He gives it to you. You know, you couldn't make this up if you tried, could you? It's awesome. And Peter is a beneficiary of all of this, isn't he?

And chapter 16, Jesus wants Peter to know it. Let's just look at that. Jesus wants Peter to know all is well. When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James and Salome, bought spices so that they might go and anoint him.

[19:20] And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they were, where they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance of the tomb?

And looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed.

And he said to them, do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, look at this friends, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee.

There you will see him just as he told you. Go tell the disciples, says the angel and Peter. He's going to Galilee just as he told you.

The angel is saying, remember Jesus' words. Remember that you can trust Jesus. It's just as he told you. And friends, if you're struggling in the Christian life just now, you need to trust Jesus.

[20:33] He's most certainly in control of your circumstances just at the moment, regardless of your feelings or appearances.

Just listen to this, what Sinclair Ferguson says. Focus on what God is doing in your circumstances. Do not become obsessed by what either man or nature may be doing.

You may not at first recognise God's footprints, but believe that they are there and be assured that he is working out his perfect purpose in the midst of chaos around you.

It's the enigma, isn't it, of the Christian life. He had no form or majesty that we should look at him.

And in our passage, Satan had upped his game, hadn't he? And it had looked like Jesus was overwhelmed, that death was closing in on him like a shark that had smelt blood.

[21 : 37] But then suddenly he spoke and we see the reality of the situation. Just look with me, friends, at chapter 14 verses 61 and 62.

It's like a nuclear explosion. It would register on a Geiger counter, this would, if you could record it. Look at verse 61.

But Jesus remained silent and made no answer. Again, the high priest asked him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And look at this, friends, look, verse 62. Jesus said, I am.

And you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven. Do you see? What Jesus is saying, he's saying, it's going to be like this to the high priest.

You don't believe my words, but there will be a day when you'll see me as I am. It'll be an onslaught to your senses and you'll have no option but to bow the knee as you meet me again as your judge.

[22 : 47] So here it is, friends, the creator of the universe. He entered our suffering. He died for our sin. He arose victoriously.

He ascended back into heaven and he's going to return and bring in the new creation. And Jesus says to his followers, go tell. Shall we pray?

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you once again for sending your Son into this world. and we ask Father that you'd forgive us when we don't properly manifest the gravity and the magnitude of what you've done for us.

When we are enticed by the world and we accept the world's comforts and we're reluctant or our words are not compatible with our behaviour.

So we pray Father you'd forgive us for this and that you'd send us out afresh into this world with a glorious message of your Son Jesus Christ and we pray that we'd be like the Apostle Peter who went out into the world boldly and proclaimed your Son and built your church and so we lift our prayer to you confidently in the name of Jesus Christ Amen