

The Jesus Prayer

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[0 : 00] I look forward to hearing Philip shortly speaking to us from the scriptures. And so we're going to turn now to the Bibles and to our reading this morning. We're going to be looking at Mark's Gospel, chapter 14.

So you might want to turn up page 851 if you have a church Bible, Mark's Gospel, chapter 14. But first, we're going to read a few verses in the Old Testament in the prophet Isaiah, chapter 51. Isaiah 51 at verse 17. Somebody shout me the page when you find it if you have a church Bible. See?

612. 612 in the church Bible. So Isaiah 51 at verse 17 and then Mark chapter 14 at verse 32. Wake yourself, wake yourself. Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the hand of the Lord the cup of his wrath, who have drunk to the dregs of the bowl the cup of staggering.

[1 : 03] There is none to guide her among the sons she has borne. There is none to take her by the hand among the sons she has brought up. These two things have happened to you. Who will console you?

Devastation and destruction. Famine and sword. Who will comfort you? Your sons have fainted. They lie at the head of every street like an antelope and a net. They are full of the wrath of the Lord, the rebuke of your God.

Therefore hear this, you who are afflicted, who are drunk, but not with wine. Thus says your Lord, the Lord, your God, who pleads the cause of his people. Behold, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering, the bowl of my wrath you shall drink no more.

And I will put it into the hands of your tormentors who have said to you, bow down that we may pass over. You have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to pass over.

Now turn to Mark's Gospel, chapter 14. And verse 32. Where Jesus, after the last supper with his disciples, has gone to the Garden of Gethsemane.

[2 : 18] And they went to a place called Gethsemane. 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 further, he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, that 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 he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch 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.

[3 : 30] 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? 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.

Amen. And may God bless to us his word. I'm so glad that you sat down.

Didn't know what to say. In Australia we're very polite people. We say be seated. Now in England they just say sit down. It always sounds like a schoolmaster giving directions.

But then again, that's the English. I thought I'd tell you something funny just to begin with, because there's no other joke in the rest of this sermon. So just get yourself relaxed.

[4 : 35] Enjoy. You know what it is. I'm not wearing a suit, because an Australian in the suit is called the defendant. So I thought that would be inappropriate here. We're going to look at this

passage.

So let's get it open. Shall we? Mark 14. 32 to 42. And when we think about the prayer of Gethsemane, there's not a joke in it, is there? So, what we're doing today is listening to a child's prayer.

Now there's nothing more intimate and private than your prayer life. And so to listen in to somebody else's prayers is to listen in to their very souls.

And so as we listen in to Jesus' prayer, we are walking really on holy ground. All the more so because it's his prayer about his death, as he prepared himself for the ordeal that he was about to endure.

And in listening to this prayer, we learn many, many lessons about all kinds of different topics. I hope you will see by the end of the sermon that we've learned about prayer.

[5 : 44] But we learn also about the Trinity. We learn about temptation. We learn about death and wrath. And especially we learn about the love of God. There's so much more.

So, just let me lead you in prayer for a moment as we sum to this incredible passage in the Scriptures. Heavenly Father, we do pray that you would help us now.

Help us to know, to understand what it is that you are revealing by your Spirit in recounting this moment in the life of our Lord. Help us to understand, to know of his passion, of his sacrifice.

Help us to understand what we can from this passage. Guard my mouth and guard our ears and guard all our hearts, please, Father, that we may truly appreciate your amazing, your astonishing love for us.

And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. What we see in the garden is what I would call the unusual Jesus.

[7 : 01] For it's not the Jesus that you see in the rest of Mark's Gospel. He is usually the calm Jesus. In Mark 4, when there is a storm at sea, everybody else is panicked.

He's asleep in the back of the boat. In Mark 5, Jesus is confronted by the man who's controlled by a legion of demons. Everyone's terrified of this man. The whole place is chaos.

He is in chaos. The people are afraid. Jesus is not afraid in the slightest. He heals a woman with a flow of blood. He raises Jairus' daughter.

He walks on the water and gets in the boat and says to the disciples, don't be afraid. I mean, just in those two chapters, that's what Jesus is like. We see him in control and calm.

And indeed, we see through Mark's Gospel the resolute Jesus, resolutely facing Jerusalem, knowing what is going to happen there, teaching his disciples he's going to be crucified there, and fearlessly leading the way on to Jerusalem.

[8 : 08] His disciples were afraid in chapter 10 because they knew where he was going. And throughout the Gospel of Mark, the disciples act in literary terms as his foils.

They're always doing the wrong thing all the time to help you see what the right is. They are afraid, but he is not. Sometimes where they don't understand what they're saying, which is most of the time, they speak up with bravado.

I can drink the cup that you drink. I will never fall away. But of course, they can't drink his cup. And they all do fall away.

And in this section of the prayer, the disciples, we see them failing yet again. For Jesus was facing death. And the disciples had come with him, three in particular, very close to him.

But now, they all fall asleep. Even though Jesus is unusually anxious and bids them to stay awake, lest they fall into temptation themselves, they all fall asleep.

[9 : 20] If you've ever read Socrates and his death, Socrates is calm and philosophic about his death. He has a dialogue, a discussion with his disciples about his death and about not grieving for him because they're not grieving for him.

He says, you're grieving for yourselves. So persuasive is he that death is a good thing and his death is a good thing that his disciples decide to die with him. And then he has to talk them out of it and we get one of the very earliest arguments against suicide in Western literature as Socrates persuades his disciples that though his death is a good thing, yet their death would be a bad thing and they should stay alive.

Socrates is calm, cool, collected, philosophical, reasonable. But when Jesus faces death, he shrinks back from it in horror.

We read in verse 33, he was greatly distressed and his soul was very sorrowful, even unto death. This is because of what he knew.

He knew about death, which Socrates didn't know. He knew what death held. He knew what the Bible teaches about death.

[10:47] And so, he was different to Socrates in this regard. Quite different to Socrates in this regard. See, Jesus knew from the Bible about death.

For, Jesus knew that death was indeed the penalty for sin. He knew that in death, he was going to face the wrath of God.

He knew what Socrates didn't know. See, Socrates didn't know what death held for him. Socrates said, but now it's time for me to depart, for me to die, for you to live.

But which is going to a better state is unknown to everyone but God. See, Socrates didn't know what death held. But Jesus knew.

He knew that death is the wages of sin. He knew that death is the judgment of God. He already knew that in death, he was going to become sin. In death, he would be forsaken by his father, calling out to his father, my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

[12:01] Why have you deserted me? Why have you abandoned me? He knew what Socrates didn't know, the wrath of God. He knew that he, the servant of God, was going to bear the sins of the world for the sin of the world was going to be placed upon him so that he might turn aside God's righteous anger.

So he was praying in the face of the wrath of God. And in the face of the wrath of God, the summary of his prayer is found in verse 35.

Going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. His request has two parts to it.

One, if it's possible. And two, the hour might pass. That is, he was praying not to die. He didn't want to die.

Which is absolutely right. It is not right to ever want to die. He shouldn't want to die and he didn't want to die.

[13:15] He didn't and shouldn't want God's wrath. He shouldn't want to be separated from his father and abandoned by his God. And so he asked for the cup of God's wrath to be removed.

As we read in Isaiah 51, God took the cup of wrath from the people of Israel at the last moment and gave it to their enemies. can you not now remove this cup of wrath from me?

It may be still possible. There may be some other way. There may be some other time. This hour mightn't come now. The hour of his appointment with death.

The hour of his betrayal of death. The hour of his judgment. That somehow it may be delayed. It might be put off. There might be another occasion. And so the content of his prayer is spelled out there for us in verse 36.

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.

[14:21] Let's take that verse apart bit by bit as he kept our eyes on that one. Firstly, notice how he addresses God. Abba, Father. We're used to calling God Father in this personal way.

But that's because we have followed the Lord Jesus Christ. Others weren't used to it until Jesus. This close, loving approach to God was one of the distinctive characteristics of his speech.

He called on God for a father's protection and provision. He called on his father with submission and reliance. You fathers who are here and you grandfathers who are here, you know how you love to have your children lovingly and trustingly asking you for things that you may be able to give to them.

Even though we're sinful, we know how to give good gifts to our children. We know how much of a father it makes us feel. You can't feel much more like a father than when you protect your little ones.

When you provide for your little ones. That's what makes a father feel like a father. Secondly, Jesus acknowledges his father's power.

[15:39] Everything is possible for you. Jesus had taught this himself. He had said to our father who had the boy with the awful evil spirit, if you can, all things are possible for one who believes.

He said to the disciples about being saved when it came on the subject to the rich young ruler and rich people. He said, with man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with

God.

Jesus was not praying to an impotent father, but to the omnipotent God of all the world. To the father who could stop it now.

To the father who could put twelve legions of angels at his disposal. So thirdly, having prayed to Abba, the father for whom all things are possible, he makes the request of the prayer.

Take this cup from me. Remove it. Take it away. He knew only too well it was the cup of God's wrath. The cup he told his disciples back in chapter 10 that he had to drink.

[16:56] There was no other good enough. There was no other could drink it for us, for there was no other good enough to pay the price for sin. Before the foundations of the world, he was chosen for it.

Before he was born, the Old Testament had predicted it. Throughout his ministry, he had taught and predicted and prophesied that this was going to happen. But now, now that he's there, face to face with the horror of it, he prays, is there any other way?

If it is at all possible, please take it from me. Why? Why does he pray like this?

Because what he was about to experience is so horrid, awful, fearful, unbearable, so horrendous, so appalling, as the scripture says, it is a dreadful thing.

It is a thing full of dread. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And our God is a consuming fire.

[18:21] Friends, we have lost the awesome horror of hell. the wrath of God is reduced in churches.

It's rejected in our community. It's ridiculed by our comedians. And so has become remote for Christians. But Jesus, when facing it, asked repeatedly whether there was not some other way out. where there was not some any way that could avoid what God had revealed to him. Socrates, in his abject ignorance of God and the judgment of God, could play political dialogue meetings, could run philosophy 101 as he came to drink the hemlock.

But Jesus was not ignorant of God. Jesus was not ignorant of sin. Jesus was not ignorant of the wrath of God. Jesus was not ignorant of the hell that stood ahead of him.

However, in the midst of this fearful horror, he prays, yet, not what I will, but what you will.

[19:51] that's a marvelous word yet, but, it's one of the more important words of the Bible really, for the whole of the Bible tells us about we're going the wrong way, but, God has other plans for us.

I don't want to die, but, let your will be done. for here we have, here we have a son praying to his father in perfect submission, not just a son, but the son, not just the son, but the righteous son, praying to God his father, for Jesus is the sinless one.

He's not self-serving, but God serving. he's not self-saving, but others saving. As the ironic word of ridicule came to him while he was hanging on the cross, oh, he saved others.

Can't he save himself? Well, no. If he saves others, he cannot save himself.

And if he saves himself, he cannot save others. So while he expresses his righteous desire not to die, he still affirms his ultimate desire to serve his father's will, not his own desires.

[21:34] When confronted with a choice between two right options, there's nothing better than choosing the ultimate good of doing God's will. will.

Now, some people very foolishly say we shouldn't pray if it be your will. For such a prayer is lack of faith, they say. We're doubting that God can do it.

We're doubting that God will do it. But Jesus prayed that way, so please don't tell me not to. Jesus prayed this way even knowing God's revealed will.

It's not a lack of faith that Jesus is expressing at this point. This actually is the clearest expression of faith. It's saying, this is the situation, please God, do what you will with my situation.

I put my situation in your hands. I depend upon and rely upon you. That is the ultimate expression of faith. Not what I want, but whatever you want will be the best.

[22:32] And we're told in Hebrews chapter 5 that Jesus through his cries and tears learnt obedience and was heard because of his reverence for, because of his godly fear.

But how was Jesus heard? He asked not to die and he died. So how was that having your prayer heard?

he prayed to the one who was able to save him from death? And the answer appears to be no. Here we have the perfect son praying to the perfect father, yet his request is denied.

He is the father for whom all things are possible and who knows how to give good gifts to his children. children. He is the son who doesn't deserve death and who asks in faithful submission to his father and it looks as if he was not heard.

For the next day he was crucified. So how was he heard? Let me suggest to you in three ways. [23 : 53] Firstly, what he ultimately asked for is what he got. God's will to be done. And it was.

So actually the answer was yes. I want this and I want that and the two are conflicting. This is what I really want.

Well that is what he really got. Secondly, as Hebrews 5 says, he learnt obedience. Not in the sense of learning to be obedient, he was that already, but in the sense of learning what obedience means, what it costs to be an obedient son in a sinful world.

You see, prayer is answered at many levels, not simply in what you ask for, but also in what God is willing to give you. He learnt what obedience meant and that is why he is for us such a faithful high priest, able to sympathise with us in our life.

Thirdly, it's answered in that he didn't fall into temptation. For remember how Jesus warned his disciples, watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation, verse 38.

[25 : 13] Jesus watched, Jesus prayed, and when the moment came, as Peter wrote later in his letter, when he was reviled, he didn't revile in return, when he suffered, he didn't threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.

Jesus did not fail at the moment of temptation, at the great trial, at the great testing, Jesus stood firm. However, the disciples, they didn't watch, they didn't pray, they fell asleep.

They deserted him and fled, one so desperate to get away, he left his clothes behind and ran away naked, and loud mouth brave Peter, he drew his sword, he followed Jesus even to his trial, but only to deny him three times, with curses and swearing.

Jesus' prayer was heard in that he received what he asked for, God's will was done, he learnt what obedience meant in a sinful world, and he didn't fall into temptation.

So, look at the lessons from the prayer. See, there are so many, more than I can mention in these few moments, but here are four or five. Firstly, it tells us about prayer itself.

[26 : 36] The way to approach God as our Father, our heavenly, almighty, loving Father, who provides good gifts to his children. the rightness of asking our Father for anything, expressing our desires to him for anything.

The rightness of placing our desires in the context of God's will, not my will being done, but your will being done. In the way in which we are heard in many layered kinds of complex fashions, because prayer is not simply a shopping list, but an expression of our relationship, and our relationship is the relationship with God almighty.

So prayer, we learn all kinds of things about prayer in this prayer. Secondly, we learn some things about the Trinity in its operation.

Not the Spirit, he's not mentioned here, but the Father and the Son. For even though the Father and the Son are equally God, yet it is the Son who prays to the Father, to his Father, as his God.

God the Father doesn't pray to the Son, but the Son prays to the Father, for the Father is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Son submits willingly to the Father as his God, seeking to do his Father's will above all things.

[27 : 57] Doesn't tell us everything there is about the Trinity, but it's a very important little window into the interpersonal relationships within the three persons who are one God.

God. Thirdly, we see something about temptation. By prayerful watchfulness the disciples failed as Jesus succeeded in defeating temptation.

Here is a model of proactivity in prayer, committing things to the will of God before they even happen. But more significantly, we learn of death and wrath on sin.

For here in Jesus' struggle in prayer, we see the horror of sin bearing, the awesome pain, not the physical suffering. That seems not to have disturbed Jesus as much as this does.

It's not just the death of martyrdom that he goes through, but the awesome pain of the sinless one becoming sin to receive God's wrath on our behalf.

[29 : 06] For there on the cross, the Father and the Son, who had lived in all eternity in a perfect unity, the Father and the Son, who were one, the Father and the Son took the sin of the world into their perfect relationship.

As one great one put it, mystery of mystery, God deserts God. Your sin, my sin, sin, our sin, cut into the very Godhead between Father and Son.

And it's in this prayer in Gethsemane, we have the privilege, the audacity to listen into the personal struggle and angst of the Son struggling in the wrestle with death and the wrath of God.

If there was any other way, would not God have chosen it? All things are possible to you, take this cup from me.

If there was any other possibility, would not God have taken it. How blasphemous it is when we think that sin doesn't matter.

[30 : 39] How blasphemous it is when we think that we're good enough for God as we are. What appalling blasphemy it is when we think that sin isn't important, a little bit, it's okay, blasphemy it is when we think that there may be some other way to God than Jesus Christ, some other saviour that might help us to find our way up the mountain to God, some other name by which we may name.

If there was any other way, would not God have taken it when his son said, all things are possible to you, Father?

take this cup from me. If there was any other way, how blasphemous it is when people think that God doesn't care for our sin and our suffering and our world and ourselves.

How much more could God care than hearing his son's prayer in that garden on that night? Which leads me to the final point, which is not a new point, but a summary of everything I've said so far.

In the garden, what we do see is the love of God. I don't like the trivial, God loves you. It's like saying, have a nice day, enjoy your meal.

[32 : 17] It's a kind of, God bless you. love of you. I don't like the trivial way in which people speak of God loves you. Why?

Because I've read what happened in the Garden of Gethsemane. Because I've read when Jesus prayed to his Father.

And from here have come to understand just a little bit more of the enormity of the love of God. for me.

You fathers, imagine, imagine your child asking and pleading, crying out for something that you can't give them.

For something that's good and deserves but you just can't afford it. Break your heart when you can't do things for your children that are right.

[33 : 21] Imagine them asking with tears for something that you can give them and yet for the sake of some bigger purpose, some other purpose, you won't give it to them. it breaks my heart as it does any fathers.

They have to say, no, that's a good thing, but there are other things that take priority over the good thing. You're a good boy for asking.

You're a lovely girl that I love. You're asking in the right way, but there are other things. Here is the perfect, omnipotent father, listening to the perfect son in deep distress, trouble, overwhelming sorrow, pleading for an alternative, crying out with tears, crying for the life that he deserves.

And why does his father, will his death? Why? For our salvation, that's why.

For you and for me, for sinners such as us. Paul wrote, God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[34 : 55] This is where we see the love of God. And that while we were still sinners, Christ said, not my will, but your will be done.

John wrote, see what kind of love the father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God, and so we are. To become the children of God, see what manner of love the father has for us. Where do you see the love the father has for us? But in his listening to the prayer of his son in the garden of Gethsemane, when his heart must have been breaking, to hear his son pleading with tears.

most famous verse in the Bible is John 3.16, isn't it? For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Ever pondered? Which is the most important word in that verse? They're all important, of course, but which one is the one that really is the most important.

[36 : 18] God, love, the world, only some, whoever believes not perish have eternal life.

they're all important. But I think the most important is the word so.

For God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

God loved the world and it is to this extent that God loved the world. The word so means both of those things.

He so loved the world so much and in this way he loved the world that he gave his one and only son.

[37 : 34] if you don't know this saviour and his love for you, if you do not know his father and his father's love for you, then ask a Christian friend about it.

ask him and say, can you tell me more about this love that he was talking about today? In a moment I'm going to finish and I'll lead in prayer and I'll lead the kind of prayer that would take you into this love that the father has for the son and the son has for the father that you see in their love for us.

That the son should so die and the father give him. And then after I've prayed, we're going to sing a hymn together, a song together.

And those of you who know the love of the father, those who know the love of the son, those who know the love of God that is found in this garden, in this struggle, in this moment of prayerful crying and agony, those who know that, we will sing together the praises of God, as we sing how deep the father's love for us, how vast, beyond all measure, that he should give his only son to make a wretch his treasure.

It's a wonderful hymn, isn't it? As it captures us. When I was a little boy, I went to Sunday school and we used to sing all kinds of songs.

[39 : 22] songs, I didn't understand them until I was converted, but I sang them. And then suddenly when I was converted, I understood what it was that I'd been singing all those years.

One of them was how greatly Jesus must have loved me. Have you ever seen that one you were here in the old scripture union one? It was very simple. how greatly Jesus must have loved me, how greatly Jesus must have loved me, to bear my sins, to bear my sins, in his body, on the tree.

And when I came to know that I was the sinner and that he bore my sins, in his body, on that tree, I understood how greatly Jesus must have loved me.

Let's pray. And if you want to know that forgiveness that he won, you want to know Jesus as your savior, then as I pray this prayer, I'll pray it really slowly, and you might like to say it in your own mind and heart to God, after me.

Just quietly, in your own heart, dear God, dear God, I know I'm not worthy to be accepted by you.

[41 : 25] I don't deserve your gift of eternal life. I'm guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you.

I need forgiveness. forgiveness. And I need forgiveness. Thank you for sending your son to die for me that I may be forgiven.

Thank you that he rose from the dead to give me new life. Please forgive me.

and change me that I may live with Jesus as my Saviour and my Lord.

Amen. And friends, if that is your prayer, especially if it's the first time you've ever prayed a prayer like that, then rest assured you will be forgiven and you will be saved because that is why Jesus died.

[43 : 17] That is why he's risen again. He died for us and our forgiveness. But if it is your prayer, then why don't you tell a friend about it.

Just say, I prayed that prayer today. Can you help me? Or one of the staff members who are here at our church. I prayed that prayer. Can you help me? And if it is your prayer for your lifetime and you've always been praying that prayer and you've known the Lord as your Saviour and Lord, then about we stand and sing this wonderful song together, how greatly, about the great love of the Father for us.

Amen. Amen.