

# Jesus Messiah: Seeing Christ In The Gospel Of Mark

*“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”  
(Mark 1:15 ESV)*

*And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said,  
“Truly this man was the Son of God!”  
(Mark 15:38–39 ESV)*

## **My Soul Is Very Sorrowful, Even To Death**

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**Mark 14:26-52**

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### **Introduction:**

Good morning. I want to invite you to open your Bibles this morning to Mark 14:26; that's on page 851 in your pew Bibles. When I was in seminary I remember hearing someone describe the Gospel of Mark as basically a passion narrative with an extended preamble. I think what they meant by that is that Mark really slows down and zooms in on the central event of Jesus' life. He is focused on the suffering and agony of the cross. And in Mark's perspective that suffering begins when the Lord's Supper ends. We talked about the Lord's Supper last week and we talked about how Mark bracketed or framed that story with a prediction of betrayal in verse 21 and a prediction of denial in verses 26-31. We'll pick up the story there and we'll walk all the way through the arrest and abandonment of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Hear now the Word of the Lord, beginning at verse 26.

And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. 27 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.’ 28 But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” 29 Peter said to him, “Even though they all fall away, I will not.” 30 And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.” 31 But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same. 32 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” 35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 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.” 37 And he came and found them

sleeping, and he said to Peter, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? 38 Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” 39 And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to answer him. 41 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. 42 Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.”

43 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. 44 Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.” 45 And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, “Rabbi!” And he kissed him. 46 And they laid hands on him and seized him. 47 But one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. 48 And Jesus said to them, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture me? 49 Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize me. But let the Scriptures be fulfilled.” 50 And they all left him and fled.

51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. (Mark 14:26–52 ESV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God!

I mentioned that Mark slows down here and we are going to try and do the same. We are going to ask the 3 questions that we are always supposed to be asking whenever we read any text of Holy Scripture. We don't always make each of those questions explicit when we preach through a passage, but we are going to do that today. We are going to ask what we learn about God in this story – specifically we're going to ask what we learn about Jesus in this story, then we're going to ask what we learn about ourselves and finally we are going to ask what we learn about the salvation that is ours because of Christ. Mark provides us with a lot of information here so we should be able to say useful things in each of those categories.

Let's talk first:

### About Jesus:

This is Jesus at his best. Mark has the spotlight turned up to full blast in this story and everything we see is beautiful. Let me just point out a few things. First of all we see that:

#### **1. Jesus didn't want to be alone**

Part of what I love about the Garden of Gethsemane story is how it shows us the humanity of Jesus. Now that's part of what makes it complicated too; it delves into the mystery of the two natures of Christ – he is truly God and truly man and that's massively complicated, but it is his

humanity that is front and centre in this story and as a human he wants to be with his friends when he is hurting and facing a personal trial. Why should surprise us? One of the first things God said to a human being was:

“It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18 ESV)

We were made for friendship – and part of the agony of the passion story for Mark is the fact that in the end when he needed them the most the friends of Jesus failed. He needed them to keep watch and to pray with him and for him and they fell asleep. He needed them to stand with him when the whole world was turning against him. He wanted them to do that – he needed them to do that – and part of the agony of the cross is that they couldn’t do it. He was robbed of what humans desperately crave. They want someone to stand beside them in their hour of need and Jesus didn’t have that.

The second thing we learn about Jesus here is that:

## **2. He didn’t want to bear the sins of the world**

Again – we’re into the mysteries of the two natures of Christ – I get it! But the story is pretty clear. Jesus did not want to drink the cup. He prayed and said:

“Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me.” (Mark 14:36 ESV)

Unless I missed something in Bible School, that does not sound like the prayer of a person who wanted to die for the sins of the world. “REMOVE THIS CUP FROM ME! Is there any other way?”

Am I reading that wrong?

It sounds for all the world to me like Jesus did not want to drink the cup.

You see it wasn’t about DEATH – it was about the cup. Jesus was more than man enough to DIE – that wasn’t the source of his agony – what he didn’t want was to stand before God to answer for

the sins of the world. James Edwards put it this way:

“who can imagine what it would be like to stand before God to answer for every sin and crime and act of malice and injury and cowardice and evil in the world?<sup>1</sup>”

That’s what Jesus wanted out of – and who can blame him?

God is holy – God is a consuming fire – God is of purer eyes than to look upon evil – so Jesus knew what would happen to him in that moment. He knew that he would see nothing of the compassion of God. He knew that he would face the full blast and fury of the wrath of God Almighty on our behalf.

And he asked if there was any way around that.

Many theologians say that this was the crucial moment in salvation history. They say that this was when the battle for our souls was truly won. Not on the cross actually, but here in the garden. When Jesus WILLED to do what he did not WANT to do.

That was the moment when you were saved.

That leads us then to the third and most important thing you will ever learn about Jesus. We learn that:

### **3. He submitted to the Father’s Will**

These are the most important words in all the Bible:

“Yet not what I will, but what you will.” (Mark 14:36 ESV)

That is where EVERYTHING turned around. That is the pointy part of the V in the 5 G’s of the Gospel – you remember that graphic that we draw when we visualize the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary. Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 433.

(Draw it or show it). The Gospel begins up here – with God. God over everything. Us under God and over everything else.

But then we fell.

Why?

Because we elevated OUR WANTS over HIS WILL. Eve:

saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6 ESV)

Eve put her WANTS and DELIGHTS and DESIRES ahead of the will of God – and Adam who was with her – and they ate and they fell and they died.

And we have been eating and falling and dying ever since.

But this is the exact moment when everything begins to turn around.

The moment where Jesus saw that the cross would be awful. When Jesus saw that it would shame him and humiliate him and burden him and isolate him and distance him from the favour of the Father. The moment when Jesus saw that and WANTED IT NOT.

But embraced it anyway because it was the Word and Will of God.

That is the HINGE OF HISTORY.

That is the most important moment in space and time.

William Lane puts it this way:

“Just as rebellion in a garden brought Death’s reign over man, submission in Gethsemane reversed that pattern of

rebellion and sets in motion a sequence of events which defeated Death itself.”<sup>2</sup>

Have you ever thought about that? This is the moment when your life turned around.

Then lastly, in terms of what we learn about Jesus in this story, we learn that:

#### **4. He saw the light at the end of the tunnel**

And seeing that he could go through anything.

We pick that up in verse 28. Back before all this happened he said to the disciples:

“But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” (Mark 14:28 ESV)

Do you see that? He is already thinking about being with them again on the other side. Knowing that – SEEING THAT – gave him strength to go through the in between.

Hope is the fuel of faith.

You have to see what is coming – you have to see the other side – to make it through the time between.

I mentioned that we learn a lot about Jesus in this story – this is Jesus at his best – so we’ve given him the best of our time but we also learn some things about ourselves. Let me point out what I think is the most obvious; and that is this:

### **About Us**

When it comes to human beings:

#### **1. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak**

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<sup>2</sup> William Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), 522.

That's the verdict of Jesus on the disciples at the low point of this story. Everybody had said that they would be with Jesus in his struggles – Peter had outdone them all in his promises and declarations – but at the end, when he needed them most, they fell asleep and they fell away.

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.

That is a fair and accurate description of human nature. We want to do good things. We mean to do good things – but then in the end, under pressure, we fall away and we fall apart.

The Apostle Paul talks about that in Romans 7:

So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. (Romans 7:21 ESV)

I want to do good things – I want to stay the course; I want to walk the path but there are bandits hiding in the woods! My intentions are opposed! My spirit is overcome! I start walking and the robbers and the bandits appear and drive me off the road.

That is what happens to the disciples in this story – and that's what happens to all of us in our stories. We discover that we are weaker and more fiercely opposed than we had ever imagined.

By the way, that's the point of the story of the naked guy at the end of the story. Did you ever wonder what that's there for? Mark says:

they all left him and fled. 51 And a young man followed him, with nothing but a linen cloth about his body. And they seized him, 52 but he left the linen cloth and ran away naked. (Mark 14:50–52 ESV)

What in the world is that about? It's a streaker in the middle of the most serious story in the Bible – is that helpful?

Well it seems that Mark is trying to make a point – many church Fathers said that this was Mark himself – he was the young man who ran away naked and that may well be true. We know that Mark was from a wealthy family and that the church in Jerusalem often met in his mother's house so maybe he was serving as Jesus' attendant that evening – but be that as it may, the point

he is making is rather obvious. He uses the Greek word that refers to a young, strong, strapping lad in his physical prime. This is a buff, 19 year old with a 6 pack. This is a young man who had decided to follow Jesus. And yet. When the bandits came for him he left the road and barely escaped with his life.

Mark tells the story in words borrowed from Amos 2:16:

“the strong shall not retain his strength, nor shall the mighty save his life; he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life; and he who is stout of heart among **the mighty shall flee away naked in that day.**” declares the LORD. (Amos 2:14–16 ESV)

When the great issue is decided, the Bible says, even the young, even the strong will flee away naked. Salvation will be a work of God ALONE.

Under pressure, despite our best intentions, we cannot save ourselves. We cannot keep our promises and we cannot hold the road. That’s what we learn about ourselves in this story.

Thanks be to God, we also learn some things in this story about the salvation that is ours through Christ.

### About The Salvation That Is Ours Through Christ

The first thing we learn is that:

#### **1. It is something that Jesus has to do alone**

We just talked about that. This is one of the main points that Mark is making in this story. People said they would walk with Jesus down the road he had to go; they meant to, but when things got tough they all fell away. At the Last Supper Jesus said this would happen and everybody protested:

They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, “Is it I?” (Mark 14:19 ESV)

Peter went so far as to contradict Jesus – as he was sometimes in the habit of doing. He said:



“Even though they all fall away, I will not.” (Mark 14:29 ESV)

But then at the end of this story Mark tells us what of course, actually happened:

they **all** left him and fled. (Mark 14:50 ESV)

Despite their best intentions, despite their protestations NONE of the disciples was able to walk this road with Jesus. This was something that he had to do alone.

And that fact unfortunately is missed and even obscured by the Roman Catholic Church. By referring to Mary as co-Mediatrix and co-Redemptrix as they do they imply that in some way Jesus didn't do this alone, he was helped and assisted by Mary. And that is unfortunate because that obscures the Gospel. The Gospel is the Good News that in Christ God did for us what we could not do for ourselves. None of us could do this – none of us could help Jesus do this – not even Mary.

This was something that Jesus had to do alone.

The Bible seems to teach that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone because of Christ alone.

Thanks be to God – we see that in this story.

The second thing we learn about the salvation that is ours in Christ is that:

**2. It was accomplished through the sufferings that God ordained for Jesus to endure**

There is something going on in this story that has to do with the will of God for Jesus to suffer. You can see that in the prayer of Christ. He says:

“Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.” (Mark 14:36 ESV)

So there are only two wills that matter in this story: the will of the Father and the will of Jesus. Jesus doesn't WANT to die but the Father had WILLED IT – those are the only two factors at play in this prayer. Notice please that Jesus doesn't say: "Father, please protect me from the WILL of the Jews which is to kill me."

He doesn't say that because it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter what the Jews will.

He doesn't say: "Father, rescue me from the WILL OF THE ROMANS – they want to kill me Father, don't let that happen."

He doesn't pray that because it doesn't matter what the Romans will.

There are only TWO WILLS that matter here and the ONE WILL submits to the other. It is the WILL OF THE FATHER that ultimately has to triumph.

By the way this was PROPHESED in the Old Testament. In Isaiah 53:9-10 it says:

although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was **the will of the LORD** to crush him; he has put him to grief (Isaiah 53:9–10 ESV)

So whose will was it for Jesus to die on the cross?

It was the Father's WILL. It was the WILL OF THE LORD to crush him. HE HAS put him to grief. That is the WILL that Jesus is wrestling with in this story.

Not the will of the crowd.

Not the will of the Jews.

Not the will of the Romans.

None of those people matter.

It was the will of GOD to crush him.

And that is very important for us to understand. There is a truth there that lies very near to the heart of the heart of the Gospel. The Apostle Paul talks about that in Romans 3. He says:

But now the righteousness of God has been **manifested** apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— 22 the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to **show** God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. 26 It was to **show** his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21–26 ESV)

Clearly God is COMMUNICATING something through the cross of Jesus Christ. He is SHOWING SOMETHING. Paul says that he is SHOWING that he is JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Christ.

What in the world does that mean?

What it means is that through the cross of Jesus Christ God designed a way for him to be SIMULTANEOUSLY merciful and righteous. God has to be all of who he is in everything he does – so this was always going to be tricky. John Calvin put it this way, he said:

“As the law allowed no remission, and God did remit sins, **there appeared to be** a stain on divine justice. The exhibition of Christ as an atonement is what alone removes it.”<sup>3</sup>

Do you see that? God in Christ was paying the price he deemed appropriate for the full weight of our sins and covenant failures. We talked about this last week. The cross is Jesus walking the trail of blood on our behalf. It is him paying for our covenant failures. God has weighed them up. He has kept an exact account and now he is exacting a fair public payment in the body of his own Beloved Son.

That is how God shows that he is JUST and the JUSTIFIER of the one who has faith in Christ.

Jesus saw that in the Garden. He understood it. He did the math and he staggered before the price

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<sup>3</sup> John Calvin as cited by Leon Morris in *The Apostolic Preaching Of The Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 279.

that would have to be paid.

Nevertheless, he got up off his knees and he paid it.

For you, for me and for every man, woman and child who believes.

Thanks be to God! That's what the Gospel is all about!

**Response:**

Now, how do we respond to a story like that? Well I suppose it depends on who you are. If you are not a believer then I think it is pretty obvious what you should do – you should run right now to the cross of Jesus Christ. You should take hold of that cross by faith; you should confess your sins and lay them upon the body of God's beloved Son because if this story makes anything clear it is that it is a FEARFUL thing to face the wrath of a holy and righteous God. Jesus did it so that you don't have to. He faced God as Judge so that you could face him only and forever as your Father. You should take full advantage of that, because the Bible says:

It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Hebrews 10:31 ESV)

Why would you do that if you don't have to? Why would you stand before the Judge when you can stand before your Father? That doesn't make any sense. So flee to Christ. Confess your sins to him. Claim him as your Lord and Saviour and in an instant, right at that very moment – everything will change for you. Everything that matters will change for you in an instant. In less than a heartbeat you will go from being an enemy of God with a definite court date, to a child of God, filled with the Spirit of God, headed toward the favour of God and the joy of God for all eternity. It will all change for you in an instant.

So if you are not a believer, flee right now to the cross of Jesus Christ.

And if you are a believer then I think the most obvious and immediate response ought to be gratitude, humility and praise. Seeing this ought to give you no cause for boasting except in the sufferings and cross of our Lord. So boast in that. Sing about that. Rest in and glory in that.

And keep watch. Stay awake. Pray that you would not fall into temptation. Because there are still enemies out there in the dark who would attack you and lure you off the path and into the woods and away from your faith and devotion to Jesus Christ.

The spirit is willing – but the flesh is still weak.

So stay awake. Watch and pray – because this is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God, let's pray together.