



SERMON OF THE WEEK

First Presbyterian Church of Honolulu at Ko'olau

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"Jesus in Gethsemane" - Hope Restored Sermon Series

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Good morning! My name is Jenny Sung, one of the lay pastors and executive coordinator on staff.

We've been going through the book of Mark in the sermon series, Hope Restored, for over a year. It was Pastor Steve who opened up our sermon series over a year ago, on Jan 7 of 2018!

Mark chapter one verse one says, "The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God"... that is the claim that the book opened with! As we have gone through the chapters we have studied, pondered, breathed in, prayed over and even wrestled with the scriptures in the book of Mark.

Through the book of Mark, we see people question-ing, even the disciples, trying to understand who Jesus is and what it means for Him to be the Messiah, the Son of God who had come to save us.

Today's passage is the same evening as the last supper. A few weeks ago we learned about the sacrament of communion. This is the same

evening that Jesus predicts the disciples will all fall away.

At the end of the evening they sing a hymn and then start walking over to the Mount of Olives, where there's a garden at the base of the mountain ridge, called the Garden of Gethsemane.

The passage for today from God's Word. The book of Mark, Chapter 14, verses 32-42.

32 They went to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I pray."

33 He took with Him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated.

34 And He said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and keep awake."

35 And going a little farther, He threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him.

36 He said, "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." 37 He came and found them sleeping; and He said to Peter, "Simon, are you asleep?"

Could you not keep awake one hour? 38 Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

39 And again He went away and prayed, saying the same words. 40 And once more He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to Him.

41 He came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 42 Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand."

In this passage, we see an incredible intimate struggle in the life of Jesus. It's a window into the turmoil, anguish and pain as Jesus lays bare His heart and emotions, before His friends and the Father.

He's praying and knowing all the things that were coming before Him and I think that even one of these things would do me in- 1) the betrayal and abandonment by His closest friends, 2) the horrifying torture and pain of what's to come,

3) the mockery and humiliation, and I think this is the most horrifying part of it all-
4) the separation from His father and bearing the entire weight of all sin upon Himself! Jesus begins to feel the anguish and desolation of what's to come.

Gethsemane means the pressing of oil, and boy, do we see Jesus being pressed, this internal turmoil as He wrestles in prayer: In the book of Luke, it says that Jesus, being in anguish, prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Jesus takes His three closest, the inner circle, Peter, James and John, as we all rely on the comfort of close community in times of great sorrow. He asks, can you stay here and take watch? It's like when we ask our friends, "Can you sit here for awhile"? He's asking for a measure of comfort from friends.

He turns and confesses the depth of His turmoil to them, "I'm deeply grieved, to the point of death". The pain seems to be more than He can bear. Last week we heard Peter's quick response when Jesus said they'll all fall away. "No!", Peter yells, "I will never betray you!" So where is Peter's response now? Wouldn't you say something if your friend said they're grieving to the point of death? Some word of comfort? Anything?

But we read of no response. I think even now Jesus senses the separation that's to come

from his closest friends. I wonder, what was going on? Perhaps they're in denial of what Jesus has been telling them all night, that He's going to be betrayed and all will fall away, and they're unable to handle or process it. Perhaps they are exhausted and have no idea what to say, but whatever the reason, there is zero response to a pretty heavy statement- "I am grieved to the point of death".

Jesus goes off by himself a bit farther, and here's when we see the full weight of the struggle as He falls to the ground. Verse 35 says, He threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. "Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want." Three times He asks.

We know of the many daily conversations Jesus has with His father. He often went off to pray and Jesus was in constant relationship with the Father. But this one is a poignant interaction, and what we see in the Garden of Gethsemane is brutal honesty and vulnerability. John Calvin says that, while bowing to the Almighty's will, Jesus admits honestly His dread of what is to come upon Him. Please take this cup from me... the internal turmoil is breaking His heart... the grief is to the point of death.

What Jesus was experiencing was the starting of the ripping of the seams... the foreseeing of the separation, being apart from

the Father. When you think about the perfect relationship of the Trinity, the perfect union and harmony of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in intimate communion and relationship, can you begin to imagine the pain and loss one would feel, in the separation from the relationship of perfect love?

In human terms, I think one of the greatest pains one can suffer is a loss of a loved one, maybe a spouse or a parent or child. I would never assume to understand the impact of that loss for someone, as we are all different.

I can only share from my own experience, and I know that when my husband of 24 years suddenly passed away, the loss I felt was the most pain I've experienced in my life. I've heard someone describe it like losing a limb, a part of your body being gone, and it was kind of like that for me. It felt like my heart was ripped apart, parts of it removed and gone. At that moment, the separation from the love of my life, the closest person to me, left a pain so deep I felt I could hardly breathe.

Tim Keller wrote, "All His life, because of Jesus's eternal dance with his Father and the Spirit, whenever He turned to the Father, the Spirit flooded Him with love.

God is the source of all love, all life, all light, all coherence. Therefore exclusion from God is exclusion from the source of all light, all love, all life, all coherence.

Jesus began to experience the spiritual, cosmic, infinite disintegration that would happen when He became separated from His Father on the cross."

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus is beginning to sense this disintegration. He who is fully divine and also fully man, experiences the depth of human emotion- dread, anguish, despair, sorrow... In this moment, Jesus is pouring His heart out. He is undone, on the ground dropping beads of sweat like blood. He is asking God for another way.

If I had a dollar for the number of times I've asked God for another way, to please remove something, I think I'd be pretty rich. Or at least I can pay for everyone's coffee at the Hebrews bar, for life! Confession time: With the Pali Highway closure, how many of you have prayed for the cup of traffic to be removed!

Why it was just a couple weeks ago when I was pleading with God to take away a cup of suffering. I was supposed to preach and I got hit with the dreaded Type A Influenza. It was Saturday, and I was shivering, sweating and feeling like every bone, muscle cell in my body was on fire, melting and being reconstituted into mush. And I had to preach the next day!

I was begging the Lord to take that cup away, to please oh please remove this pain and the

fever. I got so desperate that I started pleading, Lord, if you remove the pain just enough so I can prop myself up on a stool and cling to the podium...

Please remove this sickness just enough so I can get through 3 services... I mean I was desperate. I was texting Pastor Dan telling him I'm sick, but that I'm gonna push through it. He called me and tried to advise me on the phone not to preach.

I was protesting, saying, "No! I think I can do it." He listened to my barely audible squeaky voice and said, "Nope, you can't. You sound like my 90 year old grandmother". Alas, I had to surrender. I was not able to preach and missed major things all week. Pastor Dan prepared a sermon in less than 12 hours and preached 3 services on Sunday, God bless our senior pastor.

We all face difficult circumstances in life. Every tough road, every difficult conversation, a conflict, a struggle- don't we go "Ah!!!" Please, take this from me! Just remove it, please.

Sometimes there's desolation and we feel like it's more than we can bear. Maybe it's an illness or a devastating diagnosis. It's a financial struggle and loss that hit you hard. It's an addiction, or a painful relationship, a fractured marriage, or the betrayal of a friend. We think, "If we can just get off that path, Lord, if you can please take this cup from me. Will you change the

circumstances. Often, The quickest way off the road of conflict, struggle, pain, etc., seems to be our plea. Please, just take this away, remove this person, the circumstance, the uncertainty... the (fill in the blank).

On the road of suffering, it may not be possible to just get off the path. The circumstances may not always change, the thorn may not be removed, and the cup may not be taken away so quickly. So I ask this question- In that space, can we give up control over the circumstances of our lives and submit our desires to God? Can we walk the path that Jesus walked, which was ultimately a path of surrender and obedience to the will of the Father. In the end, Jesus says to the Father, "Yet not what I will, but what you will." This is surrender and obedience.

I've been taking a course at Fuller Seminary on addiction and recovery. It's one of the best courses I've taken in seminary, and I think we, as the church have so much to learn from the ministry of recovery; practices like transparency, powerlessness, deep listening and surrender. There's a video I want to show you about the path of surrender and how we view surrender.

Often we think of surrender like a failure, like we lost. But when we come through it on the other side, we realize that we have gained so much more than we ever thought we lost in the first place.

The congregation watched this video <https://www.nacr.org/center-for-spirituality-and-recovery/spirituality-and-recovery-2>

The older gentleman towards the end of the video is Dale Ryan, associate professor and director of The Fuller Institute for Recovery Ministry. Go to National Association for Christian Recovery website at <https://www.nacr.org> to watch more videos.

Through the struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, we see Jesus submit Himself to the will of the Father and step forward in obedience with the words, "Yet not what I will, but what you will." In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus doesn't deny his emotions, and he doesn't avoid the suffering. In fact, Tim Keller notes that "He loves into the suffering. In the midst of His suffering, He obeys for the love of the Father—and for the love of us."

1 Peter 3:18 says this: *For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit.* Jesus fulfilled the request of all requests, to take on all the sins of the world and sacrifice His life for all of us.

This request is the request to end all requests, in the sense that Jesus has come to pay for sin for all time, forever, once and for all. No more, jamas, finito, it's final!

It's a mission of love that Jesus was called to accomplish on Earth for us. Jesus went to the chasm, the pit of despair and suffering, separation from the perfect love and relationship of the Father, because He will stop at nothing for us. We are a precious children of God, and no matter how many times we replay this scene, Jesus will always choose you. He will always choose you because what Jesus does is motivated only by love. It's a love that pursues, a love that redeems, a love that brings healing and hope. That's why this sermon series is called, Hope Restored- because God's love restores hope in our lives and for eternity.

As I close this sermon, I ask ourselves, the body of Christ, the church- 1) Can we model honesty and vulnerability and cultivate the spaces of being broken open in honest community? 2) As the people of God, how do we help each other walk the path of surrender and of obedience as we fall into the arms of a gracious and loving God?

The creation of these spaces are ones we must pursue with great intentionality. I think within the church, we have tried to cultivate spaces - places of honesty, vulnerability and community. It's in spaces like Rooted where we get into a small group and practice sharing our stories, with deep listening, confess strongholds and praying for one another. We have spaces like Alpha, a safe community where you can explore the meaning of life and

ask questions without judgement. There are spaces like Griefshare and Divorce Care, Stephen ministry, Prayer and Healing services, Women's Connection, Band of Brothers, small groups, and more. I would hope that we are looking to create more and more meaningful spaces of carrying one another toward the love of God, both inside and outside the walls of this place.

Know that the transformation happens through the work of the Holy Spirit, it is not our own doing, but His. We faithfully submit to the will of God, and He is the one who transforms hearts and minds.

Do we dare to be a community that is honest and open before God and one another- to be vulnerable and real? And can we obey and place our trust in the One who took the cup for us, and obeyed for the love of the Father—and for the love of all of us?

Let's take a moment, and pray together.

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Note: Sunday sermon texts are also available at fpchawaii.org The audio version can be downloaded from iTunes. You may also request the audio version by visiting: fpchkoolau@gmail.com